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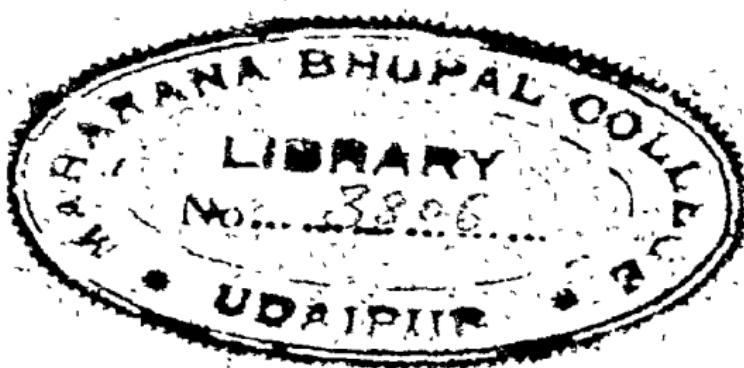
A Selection only.

HARVEST HOME

BY

E. V. LUCAS

FOURTH EDITION



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PREFACE

THE present volume is a companion to *A Little of Everything*, and, like that, is made up of selections from several of my books, with one early and hitherto uncollected piece added. All the books are published by Messrs. Methuen, with the exception of *Anne's Terrible Good Nature*, the extract from which I am permitted to include by the courtesy of Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

E. V. L.

Spring, 1913.

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among the stalls were conjurors, cheap-jacks, singers, and dice-throwers ; while every moment brought its fresh motor-car or carriage load, nearly all speaking English with a nasal twang. Meanwhile, every one shouted, the naphtha flared, the drums beat, the horses champed. The street was full too, chiefly of peasants, but among them myriad resolute American virgins, in motor veils, whom nothing can ever surprise ; a few American men, sceptical, as ever, of anything ever happening ; here and there a diffident Englishwoman and Englishman, more in the background, but destined in the end to see all. But what I chiefly noticed was the native girls, with their proud bosoms carried high and nothing on their heads. They at any rate know their own future. No rushing over the globe for them, but the simple natural home life and children.

In the gloom the younger girls in white muslin were like pretty ghosts, each followed by a solicitous mother giving a touch here and a touch there—mothers who once wore muslin too, will wear it no more, and are now happy in pride in their daughters. And very little girls too—mere tots—wearing wings, who very soon were to join the procession as angels.

And all the while the darkness was growing, and on the hill where the church stands lights were beginning to move about in that mysterious way which torches have when a procession is being mobilized, while all the villas on the hills around had their rows of candles.

And then the shifting flames came gradually into a mass and took a steady upward progress, and the melancholy strains of an ancient ecclesiastical lamentation reached our listening ears. As the lights drew nearer I left the bank where all the Mamies and Sadies with their Mommas were stationed and walked down into the river valley to meet the vanguard. On the bridge I found a little band of Roman soldiers on horseback, without stirrups, and had a few words with one of them as to his anachronistic cigarette,

and then the first torches arrived, carried by proud little boys in red ; and after the torches the little girls in muslin veils, which were, however, for the most part disarranged for the better recognition of relations and even more perhaps for recognition by relations : and very pretty this recognition was on both sides. And then the village priests in full canonicals, looking a little self-conscious ; and after them the dead Christ on a litter carried by a dozen *contadini* who had a good deal to say to each other as they bore Him.

This was the same dead Christ which had been lying in state in the church, for the past few days, to be worshipped and kissed by the peasantry. I had seen a similar image at Settignano the day before and had watched how the men took it. They began by standing in groups in the piazza, gossiping. Then two or three would break away and make for the church. There, all among the women and children, half-shyly, half-defiantly, they pecked at the plaster flesh and returned to resume the conversation in the piazza with a new serenity and confidence in their hearts.

After the dead Christ came a triumphal car of the very little girls with wings, signifying I know not what, but intensely satisfying to the onlookers. One little wet-nosed cherub I patted, so chubby and innocent she was ; and Heaven send that the impulse profited me ! This car was drawn by an ancient white horse, amiable and tractable as a saint, but as bewildered as I as to the meaning of the whole strange business. After the car of angels a stalwart body of white-vestmented singers, sturdy fellows with black moustaches who had been all day among the vines, or steering placid white oxen through the furrows, and were now lifting their voices in a *miserere*. And after them the painted plaster Virgin, carried as upright as possible, and then more torches and the wailing band , and after the band another guard of Roman soldiers.

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Such was the Grassina procession. It passed slowly and solemnly through the town from the hill and up the hill again; and not soon shall I forget the mournfulness of the music, which nothing of tawdriness in the constituents of the procession itself could rid of impressiveness and beauty. One thing is certain—all processions, by day or night, should first descend a hill and then ascend one. All should walk to melancholy strains. Indeed, a joyful procession becomes an impossible thought after this.

And then I sank luxuriously into a corner seat in the waiting tram, and, seeking for the return journey's thirty centimes, found that during the proceedings my purse had been stolen.

ON LEAVING ONE'S BEAT*

WHEN I am going for a long railway journey I always buy a number of papers associated with walks of life as far as possible removed from my own. Then the time passes easily. The ordinary papers one reads too quickly; the exorbitant require attention—they open the door to new worlds. I do not mean to suggest that one could go so far as to find entertainment in the Financial Supplement to the "Times"—that is too much; but the organs of dog-fancying, yachting, cricket, prize-fighting, the police, estate agents, licensed victuallers—these are sufficiently unusual and concentrated to be entertaining if they are really studied. Their exclusiveness, their importance, I particularly like: the suggestion they throw out that in this world all is vanity save their own affairs (as indeed it is). Such self-centredness is very exhilarating.

But the best fun of all is to be found in the stage and variety-hall papers. Not only are they the most amusing, but also the most human, for the sock and buskin have a way of forcing the heart to the sleeve. Limelight does more than all the sun of the tropics to bring emotion to the surface without shame; and it thus comes about that the periodicals of the players are full of refreshment to the cabined

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and reserved. Reading one of them the other day, I found in the advertisement columns (which should never be neglected) the following rich feast of opportunity, on which I have been ruminating ever since :—

"THE ANGEL OF HIS DREAMS."

WANTED, to rehearse April 19th, Summer Tour, Autumn if suitable, Dashing Leading Lady; must have power, pathos, intensity, and be capable of strong character work. Emotional Juvenile Lady, with pathos and intensity (look 17 in first Act; state if sing). Handsome wardrobe essential in both cases. Clever Emotional Child Actress, over 14, look 9; own speciality. Tall, Robust, Aristocratic Heavy Man; Aris. Old Man (Small Double and S.M.). Young Char. Juv. Man (Small Double); Bright Low Comedian (short).

References, lowest summer terms, and photos essential.

—There is an advertisement if you like ! Did you ever hear of so many strange wants ? I certainly never did ; nor ever did I hear of so many vacancies that I could not myself do anything towards filling. For, as a rule, one feels one could make some kind of a show in most capacities—one could maintain for a little while the illusion of being a gentleman's butler, or even a gardener, a sleeping partner, an addresser of envelopes, a smart traveller, an election agent, a sub-editor, or any of the things that are so frequently advertised for, supposing one to have applied for the post and have been engaged. But how begin to be a " Young Char. Juv. Man (Small Double) " ? That leaves me utterly at sea. And " S.M. "—what is that ?

It was while pondering upon these matters that I realised what an excellent thing it would be for many of us whose imagination is weak, and whose

ON LEAVING ONE'S BEAT

sympathetic understanding is therefore apt to break down, if we could now and then completely change our beat. Many a hidebound, intolerant, self-satisfied Puritan do I know who, forced into such a touring company as this, compelled by sheer adversity to assume the habit of a "Small Double and S.M.," or a "Bright Low Comedian," would come out of the ordeal far sweeter and fitter to play his part in the human drama, however he may have disappointed the promoters of "The Angel of His Dreams." We remain—it is largely the fault of the shortness of life and the need of pence—too much in our own grooves. We are too ignorant of what we can really do.

That advertisement came from an organ of the legitimate Stage. Obviously. In a less classic and more intimate music-hall paper, which I bought at the same time, I found the charming announcement of the birth of a son to a North of England Valentine Vox. After stating the event—"The wife of 'Baddow' (ventriloquist) of a son"—it went on thus:—"Both doing well. Baddow takes this opportunity of thanking the managers and agents who so kindly transferred, altered, and rearranged dates, so that I played places near and was able to stay in Liverpool for this event." There is something very engaging in the *naïveté*, pride and pleasure of that statement. It contains so much of the warm-heartedness of the variety-stage, where money and sympathy equally come in easily and go out easily. Baddow's suppression of his Christian name or even initial, I like: his satisfaction in having reached a position where both are negligible, together with the suspicion that he is aware that the advertisement would be of less value if the star style were tampered with. I like also his complacency as a parent of some importance. And then there is in it too the new evidence of the kindness of those in power, all working together to keep the properly anxious ventriloquist near at home; and finally the really adorable transition,

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indicating real emotion, from the somewhat stilted if imposing third person to the familiar first.

The good, affectionate Baddow! I hope mother and son are still doing well, and that the son will grow up to be a comfort to his parents, and as a ventriloquist not unworthy of his father (though never surpassing him), and a delight to audiences.

TWO IRISHMEN*

THEY are King Bagenal and Edward rage—the autocrat and the gate-keeper. They have nothing in common save their race and their genuineness ; but a book of essays, like misfortune, makes strange bedfellows.

Of King Bagenal I have discovered very little ; but it is all splendid. He was a king only by the courtesy of the countryside, who knew the royal stamp when they saw it ; to the postman he was Mr. Bagenal, of Dunleckny, in the county of Carlow. But if ever regality coursed through a wild Irishman's veins. . . . You could not qualify for the throne of a Bagenal merely by swagger and bluster : you had to be what you professed to be ; you had to be a king right through. And there is this to be said of the kings that get their title from their neighbours—that they are kings in fact, whereas a king in the more ordinary sense, who comes to the title by descent, can very easily be no king at all. His throne may be an accident, and he may never do more than sit nervously on the edge of it ; but a King Bagenal leans back and lolls.

He was superb in his lawlessness and authority. Only two creators could have made King Bagenal. One is the God of Ireland ; the other is George Meredith, who made Harry Richmond's Titanic ather and the Great Mel.

* From *Character and Comedy*.

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This is how Daunt, in his *Ireland and her Agitators*, describes the monarch; " Of high Norman lineage, of manners elegant, fascinating, polished by extensive intercourse with the great world, of princely income and of boundless hospitality, Mr. Bagenal possessed all the qualities and attributes calculated to procure for him popularity with every class. A terrestrial paradise was Dunleckny for all lovers of good wine, good horses and dogs, and good society. . . . His politics were popular; he was the mover of the grant of £50,000 to Grattan in 1782. He was at that time member for the county Carlow.

" Enthroned at Dunleckny, he gathered around him a host of spirits congenial to his own. He had a tender affection for pistols; a brace of which implements, loaded, were often laid before him on the dinner-table. After dinner the claret was produced in an unbroached cask; Bagenal's practice [his practice!] was to tap the cask with a bullet from one of his pistols, whilst he kept the other pistol in *terrorem* for any of his convives who should fail in doing ample justice to the wine.

" Nothing could be more impressive than the bland, fathcly, affectionate air with which the old gentleman used to impart to his junior guests the results of his own experience, and the moral lessons which should regulate their conduct through life.

" In truth, my young friends, it behoves a youth entering the world to make a character for himself. Respect will only be accorded to character. A young man must show his proofs. I am not a quarrelsome person—I never was—I hate your mere duellist; but experience of the world tells me that there are knotty points of which the only solution is the *rev-handle*. Rest upon your pistols, my boys! Occasions will arise in which the use of them is absolutely indispensable to character. A man, I repeat, must show his proofs—in this world courage will never be taken upon trust. I protest to Heaven, my dear young friends, that I advise you exactly

as I should advise my own son.' And, having thus discharged his conscience, he would look blandly round upon his guests with the most patriarchal air imaginable."

"His practice," says Daunt, "accorded with his precept. Some pigs, the property of a gentleman who had recently settled near Dunleckny, strayed into an enclosure of King Bagenal's, and rooted up a flower-knot." The incensed monarch paved the way carefully to a challenge. "Nor was he disappointed. The challenge was given by the owner of the pigs; Bagenal accepted it with alacrity, only stipulating that as he was old and feeble, being then in his seventy-ninth year, he should fight sitting in his arm-chair; and that, as his infirmities preventing early rising, the meeting should take place in the afternoon. 'Time was,' said the old man with a sigh, 'that I would have risen before daybreak to fight at sunrise—but we cannot do these things at seventy-eight. Well, Heaven's will be done!'"

"They fought at twelve paces. Bagenal wounded his antagonist severely; the arm of the chair in which he sat was shattered, but he escaped unhurt; and he ended the day with a glorious carouse, tapping the claret, we may presume, as usual, by firing a pistol at the cask."

There you have King Bagenal. This was little more than a hundred years ago. And to-day? What happens to-day when pigs trespass? An exchange of shots? Never. An exchange of lawyers' letters. How could his proud spirit have brooked such meanness, such postponements! Yes, it was well that he had to lay aside his crown when he did. Life was rapidly becoming too much for him. The whole course of events was tending to squeeze out old gentlemen with impulsive pistols; to-day there cannot be one left. It is impossible to think of anything more incongruous than King Bagenal in a police-station; but had he lived to our monotonous time he would of a certainty be often

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there, only at last to be transferred permanently to a real prison to await execution. How could he escape, and yet how monstrous it would be!

King Bagenal died at the right time: before duellists became murderers; before Father Mathew set a fashion against carousals; before every editor was a judge and jury. There is no longer any premium on eccentricity. People are terrified by it, and journalists, taking their ideas from their readers, foster the fear. Dullheads, as Tennyson nearly said, are more than "characters," and sheep-like faith than Irish blood. *Exeunt the royal race of Bagenals.* Enter—

In spite of generations of reckless, combative Irish gentlemen, it is odd that we have still to go to American literature for the classical instances of impetuosity with firearms. This is a reproach to Irish authors which should touch them closely. Irish gentlemen were killing and wounding each other on sight almost for centuries before America was heard of, and yet it was left for Bret Harte and Mark Twain and John Hay in the Far West to fix the type of fire-eater that carried his honour in his belt. Perhaps a line or two from the elegiacs on Thompson of Angel's will best describe what I mean:

"Light and free was the touch of Thompson upon his revolver,

Great the mortality incident on that lightness and freedom.

Why [Thompson is musing], why in my daily walks does the surgeon drop his left eyelid,
The undertaker smile, and the sculptor of gravestones and marble

Lean on his chisel and gaze? I care not o'er much for attention:

Simple am I in my ways, save but for this lightness and freedom."

Why were not similar elegiacs written years before on Bagenal of Dunleckny? What is wrong with

Irish authors? But I would except Lever, who, as a matter of fact, has Bagenal himself in his *Knight of Gwynne*—or the scenario of him—under the name of Bagenal Daly. Yet how far from life!

To read of Bagenal and his contemporaries is to be filled with wonder that any gentleman was left alive in Ireland at all. It was a state of society which at this day one simply cannot begin to understand. There are, Heaven knows, still enough ways of dying; but the short-tempered and accurate-shooting Hibernian is no longer one of them. Whether or not we are less courageous I do not know; but there is less engaging insolence about than there used to be, and less of conscious superiority. Jack not only was not as good as his master in King Bagenal's day, but he never thought he was. Similarly, his master then had no doubts; but to-day very few of us are quite certain about anything, either on earth or elsewhere. Duelling goes out very quickly when dubiety comes in. The duellist is one who is sure of himself and his ground. Mr. Bagenal had no doubts.

One word more of the Carlow King. The traditions of Dunleckny allege, says Daunt, that when Bagenal, "in the course of his tour through Europe, visited the petty Court of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Grand Duke, charmed with his magnificence and the reputation of his wealth, made him an offer of the hand of the fair Charlotte, who, being politely rejected by King Bagenal, was afterwards accepted by King George III." That sets the seal on his native royalty. The King of England had to marry the King of Carlow's leavings. It was well for our satirical literature that Bagenal was firm, for where would Peter Pindar have been had Farmer George not married the Princess Charlotte? She was his best Muse.

And so we leave the uncrowned king and come to the gate-keeper.

All that I know of Edward Edge comes from a

slender square book printed in 1821 in Allassio. It is compiled by H. H. W., and is entitled *Edgiana: Being a Collection of Some of the Sayings of Edward Edge.* Money cannot buy this book, which is as rare as an Elzevir, and much more humanly interesting.

It would be amusing to accumulate conjectures as to who and what this Edward Edge was. How long would it be, I wonder, before anyone guessed that he was the keeper of the gate at St. Patrick's Deanery in Dublin—Swift's own deanery, but in a later day, 1853 until the late 'eighties, when he was pensioned off, to die, aged about eighty, in 1894. That was Edward Edge's sphere of activity, and he adorned it, if not by any great distinction as a porter, at any rate with his flowers of speech. For Edge's niche in the Temple of Fame he owes to his tongue—to the readiness and freedom of it, to his store of odd epithets and sudden searching criticisms, and perhaps most of all to his vivid, although innocent, oaths. For just, as the French say, there is no need for a sculptor to be himself made of marble, so can a man keep a deanery gate and be no dean. Loyalty and fidelity Edge had to a degree not much, if any, less than a Christian martyr; but he did not allow the contiguity of St. Patrick's to chasten his nimble objurgatory fancy or modify his memories. Glory be! And H. H. W., in his turn, has not allowed the fear of wounding tender susceptibilities to stand in the way of a faithful reproduction of the old man's eloquence. You can, in fact, do a good deal in a book when you print it privately at Allassio.

The two richest Irish talkers of recent times are, I suppose, Terence Mulvaney and Martin Dooley. But both are imaginary: projections of men of genius. Edward Edge lived; his photograph is before me, a good deal like Charles Kingsley. Twenty years ago, the treasures of his vocabulary and the riches of his memory were at the service of anyone clever enough to get round him. And many a

Dublin resident must remember him well. To draw Edge out, to lure him on to obiter dicta, became, indeed, a recognised pastime among the Dean's friends who were humorists, and it is eminently one of these who put together this very curious and perhaps unique little book.

Edge came from Wicklow, where he was born about the year of Waterloo, and where he spent the first fifty years of his life. Here is his genealogy :

" Misther H., did ye ever hear tell of Edgware Road, in or about the city o' London ? Well, th' Edges owned that, and bedambut I'm thinkin' the weighty part o' the county o' Middlesex. It was Isaiah Edge that come over wid William, and was at the siege o' Derry. There's some o' th' Edges wouldn't look at me now. Where's ould Ben Edge, a cousin o' mine, that owns all the coal-mines in the Queen's County. There's a third cousin o' mine—John Edge—that's Sittin' Justice of Inja. The Queen come up to him in the sthreet in London, and she taps him on the sholdher, and she says, ' Begod I'll make ye Sittin' Justice of Inja,' and that's what he is this minute. Now I might be dyn' be the roadside, and fire the bit he'd offer furta stan' me the price of a pint !

" My sixth grandmother was a Jewganawt [Huguenot]. Faith, she had to gather together all her ould pooks an' wallets an' away wid her out o' the city o' Paris in the year 1572. My great-grandmother knew Latin an' Hay-ber-doo [Hebrew], and bedambut she had the weighty part o' the Gurdeck [Greek] toongue. There's an ould sesther o' mine, that's a terrible savin' woman ; that wan id live on the clippins o' tin ! Faith, she'd go furder on a ha'penny nor I would on two shillin' !

" Now isn't it a wondherful thing furta say, in the reguard o' the breed o' th' Edges, that no matther some o' them might 'a become poor brutes and divils, there was never wan o' the breed that turndne Roman ! "

He was a staunch Protestant, and loved to attend controversial meetings at which Roman Catholics were corrected and repudiated. That, says his biographer, was probably all the religion he knew—the glow of satisfaction upon the real, real or imagined, of the heretics. His hostility to Rome was continual, as, indeed, became a good "Dane's Man." Observe him before a portrait of Cardinal Newman:

"Sure, what the blazes does Muster John have the likes of him on the wall for? Heth en' if I had that ould fella's picture, I'd fire him out on the street, and bedambut I'd *leap* on him, so I would. [Going up close to the picture and peering into it.] Musha, a *dam ould Roman eye*; that's what he has!"

But he could be fair, too. "My opinion," he said once, "it don't matter Adam what bl—y denomination a man id belong iz! Sure there's *rogues* Roman an' there's *rogues* Prodesan'!"

The old man could write and read with much difficulty; hence probably the quaintness and personal character of his vocabulary, which—like a child's—consisted largely of words as he thought he heard them. Hence "alcohol" became "alcordin'"; "Protestant," "Prodesan"; "Admiral," "Admirdle"; "girl," "g'yairdle"; "foreigners," "fawrdners"; "colonel," "curdlan," and so forth. One book he had of which he never tired. *Culpeper's Herbal*—"The Culpeper" he called it—and drew all his remedies, save a few into which a modern spirit entered, from its depths.

Himself the soul of honesty, he delighted artistically in bold rogues, whatever their denomination might be; but probably preferred them, when bold, to be "Prodesan"—such as Frank Splay, the window-cleaner:

"Well, ould Splay (the Catholic I call him, an' he all the time a good Prodesan) come into the lodge th' other night, about the time he was aither talkin'

Lord Plunket's pledge. 'Well, Frank,' says I, 'how didja fare yistherda?' 'Aw, very well,' says he; 'I was clanin' the windas for such and such an ould wan.' 'Tell me,' says I, 'and did she give ye a tundherin' fine dinner?' 'Faith, she did; I eat may be 3 lbs. o' beef—the dinner was out o' the way good.' 'And did she give ye ne'er a hap'orth to dhrink?' 'Begob and she did so; "heth an," says she, "me poor man, I believe your dinner isn't compleate without the dhrink!"' 'Begor I believe not, ma'am,' says he. Well, what the divil should he do but he takes and dhrinks two or three pints o' Guinness's finest. 'Aw, gog's bloog an' 'ounds,' says I to him, 'y'ould thief Frank, but yer afther breakin' Lord Plunket's pledge!'

"Heth an' I am not," says he; "sure I didn't pay for the po-ert-ther!"

"Aw, Frank's a great ould rogue entirely!"

"Well, there was another time he was clanin' for an ould lady on the Sarc'lar Road. Mindja there was an ould cupboard in the cordner wid the divil a less nor a mather o' 3 lbs. o' beef in it. Well, when th' ould wan had her back turnd an' she out o' the room, what the blazes divilment should he be up ta but he goes up to the cupboard and bl—yead to the thruppence but he eat every dambit o' the beef out o' that, and bad luck t'all but he sticks the th' ould cat locked up inside the cupboard. Presently she comes down to the kitchen an' opens the press.

"Aw, gog's bloog an' fury," says she, 'the cat's afther atin' all me beef on me I had for yer dinner. I'm sorry, me poor man, I've nothin' furt a give ye t'ate!' 'Faith, so am I, ma'am,' says he, 'more's the pity!—an' he wid the 3 lbs o' beef in his ould body all the time, the great ould thief. Faith, Frank's a terrible cute chap entirely in the regyard of all soorts o' divilment!"

I quote a few of his detached sayings or *penseses*.

Of the waves at Newcastle :

" Aw ! the waves up here does be nothin' towardst what there was below in Newcastle comin' up to forty or fifty year ago. There'd be waves there, and bloog an' 'ounds there'd be room for a whole regiment to march in undher the curdle o' the wave wid th' arch it did make."

Of ablutions and shaving :

" Sathurda' nights or Sunda' morn'ns is times enough for a man to wash his hands ! sure a man that id wash his hands more nor that, id have no ind'shry ! " [? Any etymological connection in his mind with " Dust " ?]

" It's of a Sathurda' night I'd always tear the heavy scoom off o' me puss wid th' ould razor."

Of a cure for a cold :

" If it was a thing ye had a heavy surfeit o' cowld, faith there's nothing betther ye could do only take an' ate a rale terrible ould salty book haird'n [buck lerrin!] that id give ye the devil's drooth [drought, i.e. thirst], an' then nothin' id satisfy ye but ye should swallay two or three bookets o' cowld spring wather, an' agin yid be in bed, be the tundherin' Mack, the lather o' pesperation yid be in id sweep the cowld to blazes out o' your body ! "

Concerning homeopathy :

" Aw sure I know all about the Home-potticks ; sure it was a woman in the city o' Paris that invented it. Little seeds and ground airubs [herbs] —that's the way the' goes to work ! "

Of one who had been dismissed for drinking :

" Well now, it's a quare thing furta say ould XYZ should 'a been put out of it for the dhrink, an' he as daycent a man as ever carried a shillin' ! Heva an' I always thought he was a man that could hold a sup without lettin' in ! "

Of a sportsman :

"One o' the brothers was a docthor; th' other follid shootin'—he'd be always shootin'—an' gog's great tare an' ounds but he was a *grand* shot! All nations id be comin' furta shoot agin him, but the might as well 'a stopped at home. Aw, there's nothin' that flies—nothin' undher the stars—but he'd hit."

And here are three of his proud boasts :—

"There's not a man in all Ireland, put England to it that same, that id be able furta hould a candle to me in the matther o' puttin' down doong!"

"There's not a man in Ireland that id be able to read the names over the shop-doors agin me!"

"Misther H., I might be blind dhroonk, and dammyskin I'd be safer in the reguard o' lockin' and boultn' th' ould gate nor another man id be an' be *black* sober!"

Let me close with H. H. W.'s description of this simple profane old man in all the glory of authority on a Sunday afternoon :

"Punctually at 4.30 he would take his stand just outside the door, on the pavement, leaving the door ajar, to wait for the Dean's coming in from the Cathedral. Edge would often have more than half an hour to wait before the Dean appeared, but these were perhaps the proudest moments of the week for him, for in the meantime the departing congregation, including the *élite* of Dublin residents and visitors, some driving, some on foot, would have filed by; and, as he stood there, *endimanche* with clean collar and the best 'rig' he could muster, in full view of all 'the Quality' did they but turn their heads to see him, he experienced to the full a dignified consciousness of being 'the Dane's port-ther,' and moreover of executing that function 'betther nor any man in Ireland.'

Edward Edges there must always be—transparent, humorous souls who do their duty and worship their masters—but with the spread of education and newspapers their speech is bound to become less individual and racy. The more praise, then, to H. H. W. for preserving for us these jewels that fell from the old gate-keeper's lips.

CONJURER AND CON-FEDERATE*

I. THE CONJURER

AMBITION takes men very differently. This would enter Parliament, and That would have a play accepted at the Court ; This would reach the North Pole, and That would live at Chislehurst ; while a fifth would be happy if only he had a motor-car. Speaking for myself, my ambition has always been to have a conjurer perform under my own roof, and it has just happened. I obtained him from the Stores.

No one, I suppose, will be taken in by the statement that I was engaging this wizard for the children ; it was really for myself. Much as the children enjoyed his tricks and his banter (so fascinating, as one of his testimonials said, to the family of the Countess of —), it was I who enjoyed him most, because I helped him with his preparations ; saw him unpack his wonderful bags and lay the sacred paraphernalia on the table ; procured for him such articles as he required ; and so forth. I have never been so near magic before. Like all great men when one comes closely in touch with them, he was quite human, quite like ourselves ; so much so, indeed, that in addition to his fee he wanted his cab fare both ways. It is very human to want things both ways.

* From *Character and Comedy*.

I have been wondering how long it would take me to learn to be a conjurer, and if it is not too late to begin. I used to meditate a course of billiard lessons from one of the great players, but I gave that up long ago. I realised that a man who wants to play billiards must have no other ambition. Billiards is all. But one might surely in the course of a winter acquire something more than the rudiments of conjuring, and I would pay a guinea a lesson with pleasure. I don't want to be a finished conjurer. I merely want to do three tricks with reasonable dexterity. Of course, if one can do three tricks one can do thirty, but it is three and three only I have in mind. (1) I want to borrow a watch and put it in a pestle and mortar and grind it to powder and then fire a pistol at a loaf of bread and find the watch whole again in the midst of the crumb. (2) I want to borrow a tall hat and throw in flour and break eggs into it and stir it all up, and hold it over a spirit lamp for a second, and then produce a beautiful warm cake. (3) I want to find hens' eggs in old men's beards and little girls' hair. Tricks with cards and money and so forth, I don't mind about, because I would always rather see them done than do them—there is such fascination in the clean, swift movements of the conjurer with cards, his perfect mastery of his fingers, the supple beauty of his hands. And tricks with machinery I would gladly forego.

My conjurer's most popular trick was of course that which calls upon the co-operation of a rabbit. I wrote to him in advance to insist on this. No man who at a children's party produces a live rabbit, particularly when it is very small and kicking and also black and white, is making a mistake. No matter what has gone before, this apparition will seal his popularity. The end crowns the work (as I could say in Latin if I liked). It was not only to the children that this trick was welcome, but to an elderly literary friend of mine, with whom I have collaborated more than once, and into whose life I

hoped to get a little brightness by inducing him to bring the tall hat which the wizard should borrow. The thought filled him with excitement. It was bringing radiance indeed into his life to know that this old hat, which had done nothing more romantic than keep his head warm all these years, was to be used for magical purposes, and have a real rabbit extracted from it.

As with pensive melancholy I watched the conjurer packing up, he told me that he had two more performances that evening, and had been in constant request (I think I give his exact words) all through the winter months. What a life! I can think of nothing more pleasant than to live thus, continually mystifying fresh groups of people—with cab fares both ways and a satisfactory fee: to be for ever in the winter months extracting eggs from old gentlemen's beards and little girls' hair, passing cards right through one's body, catching half-crowns in the air, finding a thousand and one things in tall hats. This is to live indeed, to say nothing of the additional rapture of having a fund of facetiae that not only ordinary children but the offspring of countesses find irresistible.

And in the summer months what does he do? Probably he is thinking out new tricks, squandering his winter wealth (the very reverse of the bee), catching rabbits.

II. THE CONFEDERATE

"My mother has told me of fields, meadows, and hedges; but I have never seen them. She has told me also of guns, and dogs, and ferrets, and all the perils of the warren life; but of these I know nothing too. It is very unlikely that I ever shall; for I am in love with my art, and will not abandon it until I must. My mother says I must before very long, because I am growing so fast; but I mean to keep small. I shall eat very little; I eat hardly anything now. I couldn't bear to change this wonderful career."

"This is my second winter, and I go into his pocket quite easily still. Why should everyone grow big? There are dwarf men; why not dwarf rabbits?"

"My mother says that when I am too big I shall just live in a hutch all day and see no one. But I would not do that; I would die sooner. It is very easy to die if you want to."

"What sort of a life do you think I should have if I could not help my master, *and knew that another was helping him instead?* That would be the terrible part. Once it happened to me, when I was ill and my brother went to a party for me. I suffered agonies all the evening. I seemed to hear the children laughing, and see them all open-mouthed with amazement and rapture when he was pulled kicking out of the empty hat. It was terrible. I lay there sobbing and biting my claws. But it was all right when he came back, for I heard my master saying to his wife that *Tommy* (that is my brother's name) was a fool. "Too heavy, too," he added, and then he brought me, with his own hands, a new crisp lettuce to see if I could eat again, and I ate it all, and have never been ill since."

"I dare say if I was an ordinary stage conjurer's rabbit I could bear old age better. But we do not do that, we go to children's parties. There is all the difference in the world."

"You have no idea how many children I see. And to hear them laugh; that is the best! I hear them laugh all the time, but I see them only for a minute or two. You must understand that until my trick comes on—and it is usually a late one—I lie all comfortable, although quivering with excitement, in my basket. I can't see, but I can hear everything. Of course I know exactly what is happening, although I can't see it. I know the order of the tricks perfectly. Now he's catching money in the air, I say to myself. Now he's finding an egg in a little girl's hair. Now he's passing cards through his body; and so on. And then comes the

great moment when I hear him say, 'For my next trick I shall require the loan of a hat. Can anyone oblige me with a tall hat? As this is a rather messy trick, I don't care to use my own.' They always laugh at that; but they little think what those words are meaning to a small black rabbit in a basket, and how my heart is beating.

"Then the trick begins: first my master takes out of the hat a great bunch of flags, then heaps of flowers, then Japanese lanterns, and then a wig. I must not tell you how this is done, but I know; and I must not tell you how or when I am put into the hat, because that might lead you to think less of my master's magic; but after the wig has been taken out and they are all laughing, there is a moment. . . . Then my heart seems to stand quite still. When I come to myself I hear my master say, 'Excuse me, sir, but you carry very odd things in your hat. I thought the wig was the last of them; but here is one more.' I cannot see the children, but I know exactly how they are looking while he says this—all leaning forward, with their mouths open and their eyes so bright. And then my master takes hold of my ears, pulls me up with a swift movement which hurts a little, but I don't mind (mind!), and waves me in the air. How I kick, how they scream with delight! 'Oh, the little darling!' they cry. 'Oh, the sweet!' 'The pet!'

"How could I give this up? What has life for me without my art?"

"Sometimes when we are performing in a small house where there is no platform, the little girls make a rush for me and seize me from my master and hug me and kiss me. I have been a good deal squeezed now and then; but I know it is because I have done well. If I had not kicked so bravely they would not be so eager to hold me and love me. It is homage to art. But my master soon takes me from them and puts me in my basket again. I am afraid he has rather a jealous disposition."

THE TOWN WEEK*

IT is odd that "Mondayish" is the only word which the days of the week have given us; since Monday is not alone in possessing a positive and peculiar character. Why not "Tuesdayish" or "Wednesdayish"? Each word would convey as much meaning to me, "Tuesdayish" in particular, for Monday's cardinal and reprehensible error of beginning the business week seems to me almost a virtue compared with Tuesday's utter flatness. To begin a new week is no fault at all, although tradition has branded it as one. To begin is a noble accomplishment; but to continue dully, to be the tame follower of a courageous beginner, to be the second day in a week of action, as in Tuesday's case—that is deplorable, if you like.

Monday can be flat enough, but in a different way from Tuesday. Monday is flat because one has been idling, perhaps unconsciously absorbing notions of living like the likes; because so many days must pass before the week ends; because yesterday is no more. But Tuesday has the sheer essential flatness of nonentity; Tuesday is nothing. If you would know how absolutely nothing it is, go to a week-end hotel at, say Brighton, and stay on after the Saturday-to-Monday population has flitted. On Tuesday you touch the depths. So does the menu—no chef ever exerted himself for a Tuesday guest. Tuesday is also

* From *Fireside and Sunshine*.

very difficult to spell, many otherwise cultured ladies putting the *c* before the *u*; and why not? What right has Tuesday to any preference?

With all its faults, Monday has a positive character. Monday brings a feeling of revolt; Tuesday, the base craven, reconciles us to the machine. I am not surprised that the recent American revivalists held no meetings on Mondays. It was a mark of their astuteness; they knew that the wear and tear of overcoming the Monday feeling of the greater part of their audience would exhaust them before their magnetism began to have play; while a similarly stubborn difficulty would confront them in the remaining portion sunk in apathy by the thought that to-morrow would be Tuesday. It is this presage of certain tedium which has robbed Monday evening of its "glittering star." Yet since nothing so becomes a flat day as the death of it, Tuesday evening's glittering star (it is Wordsworth's phrase) is of the brightest—for is not the dreary day nearly done, and is not to-morrow Wednesday the bland?

With Wednesday, the week stirs itself, turns over, begins to wake. There are matinées on Wednesday;—on Wednesday some of the more genial weekly papers come out. The very word has a good honest round air—Wednesday. Things, adventures, might happen very naturally on Wednesday; but that nothing ever happened on a Tuesday I am convinced. In summer Wednesday has often close finishes at Lord's, and it is a day on which one's friends are pretty sure to be accessible. On Monday they may not have returned from the country; on Friday they have begun to go out of town again; but on Wednesday they are here, at home—are solid. I am sure it is my favourite day.

(Even politicians, so slow as a rule to recognise the kindlier, more generous, side of life, realised for many years that Wednesday was a day on which they had no right to conduct their acrimonious business for more than an hour or so. Much of the failure of the last Government may be traced to their atheistical

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decision no longer to remember Wednesday to keep it holy.)

On Thursday the week falls back a little ; the stirring of Wednesday is forgotten ; there is a return to the folding of the hands. I am not sure that Thursday has not become the real day of rest. That it is a good honest day is the most that can be said for it. It is certainly not Thor's day any longer—if my reading of the character of the blacksmith-god is true. There is nothing strong and downright and fine about it. Compared with Tuesday's small beer, Thursday is almost champagne ; but none the less they are related. One can group them together. If I were a business man, I should, I am certain, sell my shares at a loss on Monday and at a profit on Wednesday and Friday, but on Tuesday and Thursday I should get for them exactly what I gave.

I group Friday with Wednesday as a day that can be friendly to me, but it has not Wednesday's quality. Wednesday is calm, assured, urbane ; Friday allows itself to be a little flurried and excited. Wednesday stands alone ; Friday to some extent throws in its lot with Saturday. Friday is too busy. Too many papers come out, too many bags are packed, on Friday. But herein, of course, is some of its virtue : it is the beginning of the end, the forerunner of Saturday and Sunday. If anticipation, as the moralists say, is better than the realisation, Friday is perhaps the best day of the week, for one spends much of it in thinking of the morrow and what of good it should bring forth. Friday's greatest merit is perhaps that it paves the way to Saturday and the cessation of work. That it ever was really unlucky I greatly doubt.

And so we come to Saturday and Sunday. But here the analyst falters, for Saturday and Sunday pass from the region of definable days. Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, these are days with a character fixed more or less for all. But Saturday and Sunday are what we individually make of them. In one family they are

friends, associates ; in another as ill-assorted as Socrates and Xantippe. For most of us Saturday is not exactly a day at all, it is a collection of hours, part work, part pleasure, and all restlessness. It is a day that we plan for, and therefore it is often a failure. I have no distinct and unvarying impression of Saturday, except that trains are full and late and shops shut too early.

Sunday even more than Saturday is different as people are different. To the godly it is a day of low tones, its minutes go by muffled ; to the children of the godly it is eternity. To the ungodly it is a day jeopardised by an interest in barometers that is almost too poignant. To one man it is an interruption of the week ; to another it is the week itself, and all the rest of the days are but preparations for it. One cannot analyse Saturday and Sunday.

But Monday ? There we are on solid ground again. Monday—but I have discussed Monday already : that is one of its principal characteristics, that it is always coming round again, pretending to be new. It is always the same in reality.

BIRDS AND THEIR ENEMIES*

FOR the past two weeks I have been watching two nests in the garden—a thrush's and a long-tailed tit's. The thrush built silently and unobserved in a box tree, the first news we had of the nest being the noisy departure of the old bird as someone moved too near. Providence surely (one cannot help thinking) having done so much for birds, might have gone a step further and gifted them with the knowledge that when in danger it is better to lie low than to bustle away. However, off the thrush flew, and revealed five eggs. A day or so later the young birds hatched out.

The long-tailed tits worked entirely without secrecy. They sought their building site almost ostentatiously, and, having settled upon it, conveyed their materials thither under our very eyes. Lichen from the apple trees formed the outer wall, and the lining was chiefly feathers from other birds, but whether picked up casually or fought for I know not. The building operations lasted about ten days; and then came the eggs; and then, as I had foreseen from the beginning, the tragedy. For these foolish birds had set up their home in the hedge that runs by the footpath, in itself a ridiculous enough thing, and then nominally for protective purposes, I suppose, had used a lichen that did not in the least correspond with the surrounding colour. All this I could have

* From *Fireside and Sunshine*,

told them, but man is never so helpless as in his relations with birds. Perhaps it would have been kinder to destroy the nest's foundations at once ; but only very strong people can be kind like that. All that was done was to call a committee to inquire into a means of hiding in some way the positively clamorous visibility of the nest. We walked up and down the path re-arranging the branches. Finally we decided that such matters are best left to Fate.

Fate, however, does not seem to think much of birds, for when, after an absence of two or three days, I went to see the nest again, every trace of it had vanished. Some village boys on a Sunday afternoon foray (Sunday afternoon being the deadliest time for all accessible creatures in these parts) had torn the nest bodily from the hedge, and it is probably now on a neighbour's mantelpiece. So much for the toil of two weeks and the maternal solicitude of a week longer, and so much for my reputation as a gentleman among long-tailed tits.

I then went on to the thrush's nest, and behold ! it lay on the ground, under the box tree, with one young bird dead beside it. Later John, the odd man, told the story : he had heard that morning an unusual noise in the direction of the nest, and had even stopped work (that extreme measure !) to see what it was ; he found nothing, but could now tell that a cat must have attacked the birds, and the old one have done her best to repulse it, but without success.

Two tragedies in as many days, two families destroyed, two beautiful natural processes brought to nothing !

Of the two depredators the cat is the more monstrous, because whereas a boy unthinkingly, by a kind of sense of duty as a boy, takes a nest whenever he finds it, a cat mercilessly and deliberately marks a nest down, watches the growth of the young birds, and strikes at the precise moment when they are as big as they can be before flying. I am not

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blaming the cat—that would be absurd ; but I am vexed with her for making my position as an oracle to the young) so difficult this morning. For the story is not yet all told. I have to add that when the young thrushes were still babies, and before the long-tailed tit had laid at all, a little girl was brought here, and I was glad to be able to show her the nests and say something about the beautiful ways of Nature. That was all right ; but this morning she came in again and was for seeing how both broods had progressed, and I had, of course, to tell her of our losses. So far as the tits were concerned the case presented little difficulty, for it comes naturally to even a little girl to think but lightly of the enormities of " horrid boys " (as we call them). But the cat ? We have the misfortune to keep a cat here, and to be very fond of it, and the odds are quite heavy that it was this identical cat that consumed the thrushes and destroyed the nest. Under that impression the little girl refused to take any notice of the cat, nor could she understand how we can possibly continue to give such a creature love and shelter. She asked me the most direct questions on the matter, and I had no answers, and now I am a dishonoured thing.

And truly the whole thing is rather a puzzle. Why should a cat that is properly fed, and has its will of the mice, eat the birds of the air ? Why should boys be unable to permit a bird to hatch out its eggs in peace ? The law of the survival of the fittest hardly applies, for surely a thrush is as fit as a cat, and a long-tailed tit as fit as a boy. I know a dozen boys at least whom I would willingly exchange for the intimacy of a pair of these birds. Of course, it is all right, really. We all prey on one another, and all in turn are preyed upon. Probably those young thrushes had each eaten some scores of very estimable and life-loving worms ; probably the tits had slain insects by the thousand, and equally probably our cat will one night be caught in a trap, and that village boy will enlist and some day fall on a battlefield.

with a Mauser bullet through his heart. A life for a life, says Nature. And yet one is puzzled still. When man opened the door to let humanity in, he let in a host of doubts and misgivings at the same time.

This is not our only tragedy. There is just now at the farm a little band of ducklings, who move about ever in a solid phalanx—a little yellow cloud which, though seven ducks compose it, you could at any time cover with a dinner napkin. I never saw such mobilisation. If unity were really strength, this company should be capable of anything. So one might think; and yet the contrary is the fact, for the motive which leads to this excessive gregariousness is not aggression but fear. Collectively, seven yellow ducklings, with weakly, twittering beaks and foolishly limp necks, are no stronger than one; but collectively their courage is greater; and just now they need courage or stimulation very badly. Because of the rats. A day or so ago the little band numbered nine, then it numbered eight, now seven, and to-morrow there may be only six. Hence there is something very pathetic in the sight of these fearful little brothers and sisters crowding against each other in their broad-day passage from one side of the yard to the other. If they feel thus when the sun shines, how must their little hearts beat at night!

Their fear of rats cannot, I think, be more intense than mine. Rats are to me what snakes are to timid people in a snake country, or tarantulas in a tarantula country. The rat idea has a kindred hold on me, and has had ever since at school I first heard Southey's ballad of Bishop Hatto. The irresistibility of that army of rats swimming nearer and nearer to the castle in the river, and then up and up the stairs. . . . The rat is so terrible and so unclean. There is the story of the cornered rat that leaps for your throat. . . .

I met a rat a short time ago. I was descending a little hill, and he was climbing it, both of us in the middle of the road. I stood still and permitted him

to pass—a great, surly, wicked, intent grandfather. A personified sin might easily have been figured thus. And yet a rat's private life, a rat's thoughts and conversation, may be far more wholesome than a rabbit's. (We don't really know anything.) Yet a thousand rabbits might play on the floor of my bedroom all night, and be hanged to them, while if a single rat so much as scratched beneath the flooring, I would lose all sleep and all peace of mind. Such is association. Such is the rat idea. And such is the basis of my grief for those luckless ducklings.

The ducklings, thrushes, and tits are not the only miniature things that are finding life too hard a nut. Old John, on his way back from dinner the other day, found a cat in the midst of that ghastly game which cats play with their victims. The victim in this case was a baby rabbit. By a sudden movement John rescued the little creature and brought it to us. To transpose a box into a hutch was, as the novelists say, the work of an afternoon, and the rabbit was placed within it, together with some grass and some milk. But either the nervous shock, or the frequency with which callers came to the hutch to make inquiries, was too much for it, and the next morning its poor little body was cold. A rabbit that could recover from a cat's persecution would, indeed, have an organisation of iron.

The memory of the bright light of fear that inhabited the little rabbit's eyes has for the time being removed all my good feeling for cats. Our kitten may frolic and curvet as she will, and twist her tiny body into a thousand attitudes of freakish and fascinating grace, but she leaves me without enthusiasm. I am tired of cats. Their rapacity is too continual, their cruelty too hideous, their beauty too superficial. Give me a plain, blundering, faithful-hearted and true-eyed dog—a mongrel, even, if you will—before all the Persians of the Orient, or so I say to-day.

Not that one is profoundly in love with rabbits.

Indeed, I cannot rise properly to the rabbit at all ; I can only feel sorry for him. To respect him is impossible : his timidity goes beyond all bounds. Man may well be gratified to cause a stampede now and again among the smaller wild animals of his neighbourhood, but when the same stampede occurs every day among the same family, he deems it too much homage. Rooks can at enormous range distinguish between a walking-stick and a gun, between friend and foe, between Saturday and Sunday. Even sparrows discriminate. But rabbits are just fools. A footstep on the ground three hundred yards away starts them for home, no matter how succulent the greenery or how distant the burrow. One almost blushes to think what incredible distances one's punctual and harmless outgoing footfalls cause rabbits to run every morning, and one's returning steps every evening. In our case the warren is hard by the path, and the alarmed rabbit has therefore, in gaining safety, to approach the enemy. " Go back, go back, you little duffers ! Finish your feeding and compose yourselves ! " one mentally exclaims. But it is to no purpose—here they all come, hundreds of them, in an agony of fear.

A few rabbits attempt courage, but never a one achieves it. They sit up with alert ears and gather together pluck to brave it out ; but by the time you are within fifty yards their hearts fail them, and they break for home. A frightened rabbit never runs straight : he swerves and swerves. This probably he has learned from experience or tradition, for it baulks the sportsman's aim. Nature never did a crueler thing than when she gave rabbits white tails : it makes it possible to shoot them long after it is too dark to see any other quarry. " Twinkletails " would be a pretty name for them. One often sees nothing of a rabbit but its flashing scut. Naturalists, I believe, are puzzled to account for it, except as an advantage to aiming man.

Young rabbits have far more enterprise than old.

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Indeed, rabbits go off sadly, almost as sadly as lambs, which take on stupidness steadily with years. A peculiarity of the young rabbit that is approached at a distance from its abode is to lie still in the fern or grass and sham death or coma. An old rabbit has not wit enough to do even that. One imagines the old rabbit a very treasure-house of counsel and warnings. Man must get a desperately bad character in the warrens.

Our squirrels are less shy than the rabbits. They have more audacity, more grit, more dare-devil. They let us approach within a few feet before moving, and then, quick as birds, with tail outspread, they dart to a tree. More often than not it is not the nearest tree : they keep enough composure to select. A squirrel seems never to lose his head ; a rabbit almost always does. When a squirrel runs he loops over the ground in the way the sea-serpent travels in pictures. Once the tree is gained, he scampers up a yard or two, on the side farthest from the enemy, and then pauses as suddenly as if an enchanter had bidden him turn to stone. Nothing in nature is more motionless than a wary, watchful squirrel. He clings to the bark with cocked head and fearful eyes, a matter of half a minute before climbing to the first fork of the boughs. But to say climbing is a mistake ; it is not climbing ; it is just running, or, better still, going. A squirrel goes up a tree.

The squirrel of the artist sits on its hindquarters, under the shelter of its tail, and nibbles at the nut which its forepaws hold. The position is, indeed, only one remove from saying grace, and reminds one of the child in Stevenson's verse who behaves "mannerly" at table. But one does not often catch them in this attitude in the woods. There the squirrel is usually seen making little furtive dashes among the dead leaves on the ground ; a tiny red animal, which, were it not for its tail-plume, might be taken at a distance for a rat. Now and then the nursery illustration is realised, but only seldom. Squirrels are

very ready to be angry, and they are incapable of disguising their feelings. They are voluble as fishwives. If you would test the squirrel's powers of repartee you must drive one to the branches of an isolated tree and then rap the trunk with a stick. He will " answer back " as long as you stay there.

One pretty peculiarity touching the squirrel is that we do not associate it with age. We speak of a young rabbit or an old rabbit, a young horse, an old cow, a kitten or a cat, a puppy or a dog ; but a squirrel, no matter what its development, is just a squirrel : that is to say, an indescribably wonderful woodland creature, as far removed from our own life and ken as any English animal. The lyrical swiftness of the squirrel partakes of the miraculous ; and this, combined with his elusiveness,—though he is a thousand strong in the neighbouring woods,—makes him a creature apart. Thousands of persons in this country have never seen a squirrel.

The squirrel is in the main invincibly and joyously untamable, although many a man has kept one as a pet. Compared with a squirrel of the beech grove, the wildest rabbit is domesticated. But, indeed, beside the squirrel all the four-footed creatures of the field are pedestrian, commonplace. Even the hare, with its incredible celerities, is dull compared with this brilliant aeronaut. The squirrel must be emboughed if he is to show in brightest pin. On the ground he is swift and graceful, but his tail impedes instead of assisting him ; in a tree, or in mid-air between two trees, he is a miracle of joyous pulsating life, a bird with an additional infusion of nervous fluid, a poem in red fur.

I must now return to the cat. Since where there is a cat there is death, and since you cannot have both birds and a cat, I said that the cat must go. (Her name, by the way, was Bobine Pellicule. We found it on a packet of photographic films, and deeming it too good to be lost, conferred it on her.) And I was the more certain she must go when that evening she

a matter of fact the attentive ear can hear a little squeaky argument before the flight, as though there was a question of precedence to settle. The bat which the cat played with must have rolled off the roof, having left the home too early.

Birds, of course, are not unmixed blessings. They certainly wake one very early ; they pull thatch all to pieces ; they eat the buds and they eat the fruit. A pair of dandy bullfinches with an irreproachable tailor and perfect manners completely stripped our damson tree of buds two springs ago. The cuckoo, too, is no credit to his race : his arrogance and want of a responsible sense are deplorable, and he sings the same song so many times over that one is ashamed of him. But worse than all are the birds that ruin flowers out of sheer wantonness—a wantonness equal to that of the boys who rob or destroy nests.

I was in the country on the first day of spring this year, and I went at once to a place in the orchard where there are five or six large primrose roots. The flowers were all out, as many as twenty to thirty on each root ; but when I knelt down to see them I found that almost every head had been snipped off. This is a bird's doing, and I have never learned the purpose of the deed. Can there be some delicate flavour in the neck of the primrose, or is it wanton destructiveness ? I believe the scoundrel is a blackbird.

I remember a letter to the *Spectator* some years ago, in which a correspondent quoted from the margin to a woodcut of a bullfinch in an old black-letter Natural History in the library at Hertford College, Oxford, this implacable note in seventeenth-century handwriting : "A smal fowle. He eateth my apple buds in spring. Kill hym."

Similarly I would indict the blackbird for thus ruining the most beautiful of flowers with his gold dagger of a bill : "A bold black ravener. He decapitath my primroses. Behead him." And yet would I ? Probably not.

THE LORD OF LIFE*

"What right has that man to have a spaniel?" said a witty lady, pointing to a bully. "Spaniels should be a reward."

IN his prescription for the perfect home Southey included a little girl rising six years and a kitten rising six weeks. That is perhaps the prettiest thing that ever found its way from his pen—that patient, plodding, bread-winning pen, which he drove with such pathetic industry as long as he had any power left with which to urge it forward. A little girl rising six years and a kitten rising six weeks. Charming, isn't it?

But, my dear rascally Lake Poet, what about a puppy rising six months? How did you come to forget that?—such a puppy as is in this room as I write: a small black puppy of the Cocker spaniel blood, so black that had the good God not given him a gleaming white corner to his wicked little eye, one would not know at dinner whether he was sitting by one's side or not—not, that is, until his piercing shrieks, signifying that he had been (very properly) trodden on again, rent the welkin.

This puppy have I called the Lord of Life because I cannot conceive of a more complete embodiment of vitality, curiosity, success, and tyranny. Vitality first and foremost. It is incredible that so much pulsating quicksilver, so much energy and purpose

* From *One Day and Another*.

should be packed into a foot and a half of black hide. He is up earliest in the morning, he retires last at night. He sleeps in the day, it is true, but it is sleep that hangs by a thread. Let there be a footfall out of place, let a strange dog in the street venture but to breathe a little louder than usual, let the least rattle of plates strike upon his ear and his sleep is shaken from him in an instant. From an older dog one expects some of this watchfulness. For an absurd creature of four months with one foot still in the cradle to be so charged with vigilance is too ridiculous.

If nothing occurs to interest him, and his eyes are no longer heavy (heavy! he never had heavy eyes), he will make drama for himself. He will lay a slipper at your feet and bark for it to be thrown. I admire him most when he is returning with it in his mouth. The burden gives him responsibility: his four black feet, much too big for his body, all move at once with a new importance and rhythm. When he runs for the slipper he is just so much galvanised puppy rioting with life; when he returns he is an official, a guardian, a trustee: his eye is grave and responsible; the conscientious field spaniel wakes in him and asserts itself.

As to his curiosity, it knows no bounds. He must be acquainted with all that happens. What kind of a view of human life a dog, even a big dog, acquires, I have sometimes tried to imagine by kneeling or lying full length on the ground and looking up. The world then becomes strangely incomplete: one sees little but legs. Of course the human eye is set differently in the head, and a dog can visualise humanity without injuring his neck as I must do in that grovelling posture; but none the less the dog's view of his master standing over him must be very partial, very fragmentary. Yet this little puppy, although his eyes are within eight inches of the ground, gives the impression that he sees all. He goes through the house with a microscope.

But for his dependence, his curiosity, and his proprietary instinct to be studied at their best, you should see him in an empty house. All dogs like to explore empty houses with their masters, but none more than he. His paws never so resound as when they patter over the bare boards of an empty house. He enters each room with the eye of a builder, tenant, auctioneer, furnisher and decorator in one. I never saw such comprehensive glances, such a nose for a colour scheme. But leave him by accident behind a closed door and see what happens. Not the mandrake torn bleeding from its earth ever shrieked more melancholy. But tears are instant with him always, in spite of his native cheerfulness. It was surely a puppy that inspired the proverb about crying before you are hurt.

I spoke of his success. That is perhaps his most signal characteristic, for the world is at his feet. Whether indoors or out he has his own way, instantly follows his own inclination. It is one of his most charming traits that he thinks visibly. I often watch him thinking. "Surely it's time tea was brought," I can positively see him saying to himself. "I hope that cake wasn't finished yesterday: it was rather more decent than usual. I believe those girls eat it in the kitchen." Or, "He's putting on his heavy boots: that means the hill. Good! I'll get near the door so as to be sure of slipping out with him." Or, "It's no good: he's not going for a walk this morning. That stupid old desk again, I suppose." Or, "Who was that? Oh, only the postman. I shan't bark for him." Or, "I'm getting awfully hungry. I'll go and worry the cook."

In what way a dog expresses these thoughts I have no guess (it is one of the leading counts in the indictment of science that it knows nothing about dogs and does not try to learn); but one can see the words passing in procession through his little mind as clearly as if it were made of glass.

But the most visible token of his success is the

attention, the homage, he receives from strangers. For he not only dominates the house, but he has a procession of admirers after him in the streets. Little girls and middle-aged ladies equally ask permission to pat him. Old gentlemen (the villains !) ask if he is for sale, and inquire his price. Not that he looks valuable—as a matter of fact, though pure he is not remarkable—but that he suggests so much companionship and fun. One recognises instantly the Vital Spark.

When it comes to the consideration of his tyranny, there enters a heavy spaniel named Bush and a dainty capricious egoist in blue-grey fur whom we will call Smoke. Smoke once had a short way with dogs ; but the Lord of Life had changed all that. Smoke once would draw back a paw of velvet, dart it forward like the tongue of a serpent and return to sleep again, perfectly secure in her mind that that particular dog would harass her no more. But do you think she ever hurt the puppy in that way ? Never. He loafes into the room with his hands in his pockets and his head full of mischief, perceives a long bushy blue-grey tail hanging over the edge of the sofa, and forthwith gives it such a pull with his teeth as a Siberian householder who had been out late and had lost his latch-key might at his door-bell when the wolves were after him. An ordinary dog would be blinded for less ; but not so our friend. Smoke merely squeaks reproach, and in a minute or two, when the puppy has tired a little of the game, he is found not only lying beside her and stealing her warmth, but lying in the very centre of the nest in the cushion that she had fashioned for herself. Tyranny, if you like !

And Bush ? Poor Bush. For every spoiled newcomer there is I suppose throughout life an old faithful friend who finds himself on the shelf. It is not quite so bad as this with Bush, and when the puppy grows up and is staid too, Bush will return to his own again ; but I must admit that at the beginning

HARVEST HOME

he had a very hard time of it. For the puppy, chiefly by hanging on his ear, first infuriated him into sulks, and then, his mastery being recognised, set to work systematically to tease and bully him. The result is that now Bush actually has to ask permission before he dares to take up his old seat by my chair: he may have it only if the puppy does not want it.

Bush, I ought to say, has lately been tried by a succession of new dogs; and although the present puppy is his most powerful super-dog, he allowed all to acquire an improper influence and knuckled under with deplorable tameness. The first interloper was an Aberdeen, who taught him to rove. Before that he had never left the garden alone; now he began to absent himself for hours, sometimes whole nights. It was all Scottie's doing, one could see. That small but insidious creature was of original sin compact—was everything that Bush was not. Scottie was unwilling, disobedient, independent, impenitent. When we went out for a walk he started with me punctually enough; but he returned alone. At what point he disappeared, I never knew. He dissolved.

At night—for their kennels adjoined—he sapped Bush's character.

"Directly we are let loose, to-morrow," he would say, "let's go up to the Common and hunt."

"No," said Bush; "they wouldn't like it. *He* would not like it." (I am *He*.)

"Oh, never mind him," said Scottie. "After all, what does it mean? Only a whack or two, and it's all over."

"But we shall be tied up all day."

"No, you won't. Just keep on barking and whining, and they'll let you loose in self-defence."

(He knew what he was talking about here, for on one cold night he won his way back into the house entirely by this device. The little blackguard!)

After a while Bush consented.

I had proof one night of the ascendancy which Scottie (aged ten months) had obtained over Bush (aged five years). I chained them up and went for some water. When I returned, Scottie was in Bush's large kennel, where he had no right; but it was warmer. "Come out," I said. But instead of coming out, Scottie whispered threateningly to Bush: "You go"; and out crawled the spaniel and abjectly began to squeeze his shoulders into Scottie's minute abode."

I should not be surprised if these conversations are not minutely true to life; but one can, of course, never know: not at any rate until one meets Cerberus on the banks of the Styx—as we all must—and puts a few leading questions to him as to dog nature, while waiting for the ferry.

But Bush is not my theme; Bush was never a Lord of Life: his pulse was always a little slow, his nature a little too much inclined to accept rather than initiate. Nor, I suppose, will our Lord of Life be quite such a Lord much longer, for with age will come an increase of sobriety, a diminution of joy. That he will not untimely fall by the way, but will grow up to serious spanielhood, I feel as sure as if an angel had forewarned me; but were he now to die this should be his epitaph:—"Here lies a Lord of Life, aged six months. He would never be broken to the house, but was adorable after sin."

TWO AMATEURS*

I

ALFRED MYNN

ALFRED MYNN came of a race of Kentish giants, and was a giant himself. He weighed in his active prime nineteen stone, and towards the end twenty-four, and was over six feet in his stockings. The portraits of him are like those of a prize man at the Agricultural Hall. In one of them he stands flannelled and bare-headed on a village green, with a church—perhaps his own Goudhurst—behind him, a belt round his equator, a ridiculous little toothpick of a bat on his colossal shoulder, and a quiet smile (as of one who expected half-volleys later in the day, and would know what to do with them when they arrived) on his vast and kindly yeoman's face.

Nominally he was a hop merchant; but the great game was too much for him, and he allowed his hops to fend for themselves while he lifted their county to the highest place in cricket. (What are hops after all?) Like Atlas he carried Kent on his shoulders.

For twenty years he was the mainstay of the Gentlemen against the Players; and a great match in the thirties and forties without A. Mynn, Esq., in the score-sheet was less to be thought of than *Hamlet* without the Prince.

He bowled faster than any man in England, except, perhaps, Brown, of Brighton (who once bowled a ball right through a coat which long-stop was holding, and killed a dog on the other side), and he never tired. He "walked a few paces up to the wicket and delivered the ball like a flash of lightning, seem-

* From *Good Company: A Rally of Men.*

ingly without effort." When he went in to bat he hit often, as great simple souls do. He preferred fast bowling to slow, which is another sign of a lack of guile. In 1836 he made 283 runs in four consecutive innings, being twice not out. To-day we think little of this; but in 1836 it was almost miraculous, and I, for one, wish it was still.

Alfred Mynn's most famous single wicket match was with J. Dearman, of Sheffield, on Pilch's ground, at Town Malling, for £100 a side. It was played on August 20, 1838. Frederick Gale was present, and he has left a description in his *Echoes from Old Cricket Fields*. "A great portion of Mr. Mynn's runs," he says, "were got by cover-point hits, though he lifted two balls apparently into some adjoining county. He scored in two innings 123 runs; and, if I mistake not, all Dearman's runs, clever in number, were cover-point hits. There were only three wides in the four innings. Dearman was a little man, and Alfred Mynn looked a giant beside him. I can see him now in close-fitting jersey bound with red ribbon, a red belt round his waist, and a straw hat, with broad red ribbon. Dearman, who had never been beaten, and was heavily backed by the Yorkshiresmen, had not the smallest chance with his opponent, and I verily believe that Alfred Mynn, out of sheer kindness of heart, gave him a few off balls in the second innings, as Dearman was 120 to the bad. The little man made some beautiful off-hits before the boundary stump, and was much cheered; but when it got near six o'clock, shouts of 'Time's short, Alfred; finish him off,' were heard from the throats of the lusty Kentish yeomen, and I have a vision in my mind of a middle stump flying up in the air, and spinning like a wheel, and perhaps if anyone will go and look for it on the Town Malling ground, it will be found spinning still."

Alfred Mynn had countless friends and no enemies. How could he have enemies? He ate gigantic suppers, and once kept Richard Daft awake all night

with his snores. When he died his noble body was escorted to the grave, at Thurnham, in Kent, by the Leeds and Hillingbourne Volunteer Corps, of which he was a member.

Let me add a sentence from Denison's *Sketches of the Players* to complete the eulogy: "Gratitude for a kindness displayed towards him is a leading feature in his character."

II

MR. AISLADIE

"MR. AISLADIE'S wonderful good nature, pleasantry, and untiring zeal caused the eyes of all to be turned upon him in the cricket field." So says Mr. A. Haygarth, who had a very pretty reverence for this great man—great not only in sportsmanship and bonhomie, but great also physically, for towards the end of his life and his cricket career (which terminated almost at the same time: he was playing until he was sixty-seven and he died when sixty-eight, in 1842), Mr. Aislade weighed twenty stone, and had a man not only to run for him when batting but to field for him too—just as David Harris was provided with an arm-chair into which to subside after delivering the ball. But even although Mr. Aislade's part in the game was so vicarious and his stay at the wicket so short, to have left him out of a match in which he was willing to play would have been wantonly to eclipse the sun. For where Aislade was were high spirits and good fellowship of the best.

He was born in 1774 in London and educated at Sevenoaks and Eton. He then became a wine merchant and West India merchant, and took Lee Place in Kent, its owner and which together were known facetiously among his friends as "The Elephant and Castle." Cricket was his passion, although he was never much good in any department of the game. Nevertheless, as I have said, he played all his life, often in first-class matches, and "his wonderful good

nature, pleasantry, and untiring zeal caused the eyes of all to be turned upon him in the cricket field."

Though later Lord's was his official cricket home, for he was honorary secretary of the M.C.C. for twenty years, Mr. Aislabie's happiest and least responsible days in the field were with the West Kent cricketers, of whom Mr. Philip Norman some few years ago wrote such a delightful history. That comely and substantial volume might indeed be called the epic of Aislabie, since Aislabie's vast jocose form dominates it, while its pages are continually bubbling with his convivial rhymes. For Mr. Aislabie was not cricketer alone; he was the Club's authorised Bacchus and the Club's self-constituted Laureate. After every match the eleven first drank Aislabie's port (a pint to every man), and then listened to their vintner's irreverent verses on the day's play. He missed nothing. Mr. Aislabie employed that very useful medium for the satirist, the rhymed alphabet, which he managed very cleverly, getting a boundary into every line. The Z—that stumbling-block to most alphabeticians, who usually decline weakly on "Zany"—he managed too, like a man and a wine merchant. Thus:—

Y was Yoicks Lockwood, hark to him, Blue Mottle!
Z—that Z bothers me; push round the bottle!

Like a sensible cricketer and convivial poet Mr. Aislabie did not force his Pegasus to take difficult hedges; he allowed liberty of action, and the rhymes are often faulty and the metre faulty too. But the spirit! Here is a stanza from a song on a match between the Gentlemen of Kent and the M.C.C. in 1833:—

Charley Harenc loves good wine, Charley loves good brandy,
Charley loves a pretty girl, as sweet as sugar-candy.
Charley is as sugar sweet, which quickly melts away, sir,
Charley therefore stops away on a rainy day, sir.
Charley knocks the knuckles of many an awkward clown, sir,
If Charley stops away again, he'll chance to rap his own, sir.
Here the poet was getting home a little, for it seems

that Harenc had been down to play at Lord's recently, but because it rained at Chislehurst he was some hours late, whereas it did not rain at Lord's at all. Like a true satirist Mr. Aislabie was always smilingly rubbing in the salt. For example, after R. W. Keate in three successive innings had been bowled for nothing by Alfred Mynn, and had been defeated at single wicket by J. L. Langdon, he wrote the following quatrain, in which " b Mynn o " must be pronounced as a dactyl :—

B Mynn o—b Mynn o—b Mynn o Keate
Tried with his bat jolly Langdon to beat.
In vain, for with Langdon can never compete
B Mynn o—b Mynn o—b Mynn o Keate.

Here is one of Mr. Aislabie's stanzas, wholly in praise upon the father of the late Mr. Jenner-Fust :—

There is a man at Chislehurst, of whose whole life the tenor
Is kindness and benevolence. Who's that ? Sir Herbert
Jenner.

He such a hearty welcome gives, and such a splendid dinner,
That even if I lose the match, I still shall be the winner.

At Eton Aislabie was adored, and for many years it was the custom to give the captain of the eleven the great man's portrait, with the names of the team written on the back. It may be so to-day, but I imagine not. He figures also historically at another school, for Hughes described him in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* as the organiser of the M.C.C. team against Rugby : " in a white hat, leaning on a bat in benevolent enjoyment " — a fine phrase. To have a crack with Aislabie took, one fancies, as many people to the pavilion at Lord's almost as to see the match. That building holds a permanent souvenir of him in the shape of a bust. The first stone of the old tennis court there was laid by his hands.

Mr. Aislabie died in 1842, and was buried in the parish church of Marylebone, but the tombstone above his wife in Sevenoaks' churchyard bears his name. He might justly be called the Father of club or house-party cricket.

TOM SEBRIGHT*

" If," says the *Draud*, " Tom Sebright was showing one of his hounds, which he thought a little out of the common way, he would indicate his delight by thrusting his hands deep into his breeches' pockets and kicking out his little right leg. He would then draw his hand over the hound from the head to the stern, and remark, in his gentle tone, that ' it couldn't be more beautiful if it had been spoke-shaved.' "

That Tom was going to understand hounds as Shakespeare understood women was evident from the first; but some years had to pass before he could come to his own pack and settle down to be its father and mother. He began under the great Jack Masters at Annesley, and then he went on to Sir Mark Sykes and Mr. Digby Legard, who were running the North Riding Hounds. It was while he was there that his good fairy interceded; for one day a young gentleman named George Osbaldeston, two years older than Tom, came to the kennels to arrange for some draughts with which to strengthen and vary the Monson pack, which he had just bought, and Mr. Legard remarked, " You may as well take the Whip as well; we've tried him three seasons, and he kills all our horses." Mr. Osbaldeston, who was all fire himself, instantly agreed, and Tom went back to Leicestershire in the employ of one who was later to be master

* From *Good Company: A Rally of Men.*

both of the Quorn and the Pytchley, and was one day to receive a cup from the flower of English hunting men, engraved with the words, "To the best sportsman of any age or country."

Tom loved his hounds with a love that must have made their Creator smile with satisfaction. Every year's puppies were perhaps "just the most beautiful I ever had." But his favourite in all his career was perhaps Mr. Osbaldeston's Tarquin, "most unerring and melodious of finders," says the *Druid*—Tarquin, the son of Trickster and the Belvoir Topper. (What a life!) Tarquin had a surly temper and never liked Mr. Osbaldeston, but he did wonders in the chase. It was in a fine run from Wragley Woods towards Market Rasen that he suddenly came out, like a shot, from the pack *and rolled his fox over single-handed*. (These are the *Druid's* brave words.) Tarquin did great work for six seasons. When he came to die, Tom buried him in the path from the huntsman's house at Quorn to the kennels, beneath a slab for which he himself composed the elegiac verse. It was Tom Sebright's first and last poem:

'Tis here my favourite Tarquin lies,
Turn away, sportsmen, and wipe your eyes;
Not the only favourite in the pack,
But Tarquin never in work was slack.

Another favourite and famous hound bred by Tom Sebright was Furtier (by the Belvoir Saladin), who may have begun in a disappointing way, but suddenly, in a February run, "came with Headless 'ull' out of the ruck, and, leading the pack by ten yards, neck and neck over Garthorpe Lings, brought that renowned fox, 'Perpetual Motion,' to book at last!" Furtier became the parent of some wonderful lounds, one descendant being the famous Dashwood. "They don't fly like pigeons," Mr. Osbaldeston used to say: "they fly like angels."

Tom remained with Mr. Osbaldeston—"The Squire," as he was called—till 1821, when he left

Quorn to become huntsman of the Fitzwilliam Hunt at Milton, and he held the post for forty years. But though it is with the Fitzwilliam that his name is most closely associated, it was "The Squire" who made Tom what he was and set his feet absolutely in the right way. To have been such a man's right hand was training indeed; for "The Squire" excelled at all he attempted, and his excellence was of the vivid, burning character that inspires and lifts. It was he who, in 1831, performed for a wager of a thousand guineas the amazing feat of riding two hundred miles in eight hours fifty-two minutes. He stood in the stirrups all the way.

Tom's language to the field was remarkably courteous and guarded even under deep provocation. He rarely said more than "Odd rabbit it altogether!" or "Rags and garters!" This is a triumph of character in one set, as a whip or huntsman is, between two such sources of irritation as a pack of restless hounds and a pack of impatient gentlemen. Of Mr. Osbaldeston less mastery of the tongue is recorded. In fact, he fulfilled most of the requirements of the conventional M.F.H., save that he also had genius. His temper was out of control as often as not, except on the great occasions of his life, and then he managed to keep it well.

I wish I could give a reproduction of Tom's thick, short figure, and his benevolent, shrewd, and plump face, clean shaved except for a little tuft of hair on each cheek, his two or three chins, and his whip of office in his hand. He lived to be seventy-two, and no man was more respected or loved. He had his little odd ways, and could be testy and sharp, but his heart was gold. Never could a present have been subscribed for with more cordiality and pleasure than the cup containing eight hundred guineas, which was handed to him by the Duke of Manchester in the Huntingdon Town Hall, in 1860: the "pleasantest meet," said Tom, that he ever attended.

With all their kindness these are not the least

sad occasions in life, these farewell ceremonies at which old huntsmen and cricketers and other fine, open-air characters take leave of activity. It is bad enough when a townsman has to retire and confess that *Anno Domini* has conquered, but it is worse when a Tom Sebright, whose life has been spent in the saddle and among his hounds, in all the eagerness and excitement of the chase—riding out into the keen morning air, amid the pungent scent of fallen leaves, urging on his pack and glorying in their glory—takes finally to the arm-chair. It is almost unbearable to think that to such a one as this inactivity and illness must come.

Tom died on a sunny afternoon in 1861. Just before the end he began to wander and thought his hounds were in the room. “Don’t you see them?” he said to his daughter. “They’re all round the bed. There’s old Blucap, and Shiner, and Bonny Lass wagging her stern.” A good way to die, so surrounded.

THE BEATING OF THE HOOFS*

HAVING occasion the other day to post from Brecon to Abergavenny, I was particularly gratified to find that the landlady of the "Castle" had put at our disposal a carriage with rubber tyres and a pair of horses; for I knew that we were thus destined to have the best of music all the way—the beating of the hoofs. And it was so. Silent or talking, thoughtful or observant of the mountains beneath their grey hoods, I was ever conscious of the sound of eight loyal and urgent iron-shod feet—not so fiercely as one hears it in the background of one of the movements of Raff's "*Léonore*" symphony, but a steady, soothing undertone.

It is not the least of the advantages of the rubber tyre, that this pleasant melody is so clarified. It is perhaps the best thing that Leopold, King of the Belgians and Despot of the Congo, has done. Before rubber tyres came in, one had to go to the horse tramways for it; and I remember how agreeable, in consequence, were the long rides up the Hampstead Road and the Brecknock Road that I took when first I came to London. But the hoofs on the Welsh macadam were better than this, for they were steady and sure; there were none of those sudden and disconcerting mishaps that are so common on London's

* From *Character and Comedy*.

greasy stones—those agonised slippings of the iron shoe with a catastrophic clamour to which not even the oldest Londoner's ear ever quite becomes accustomed.

I will not name the absence of hoof-beats in so many words as a court in the indictment of the motor-car, because the indictment of the motor-car must be getting to be very teasing reading; but I will say that the car has certainly a very regrettable immunity from hoof-beats, and has nothing for the ear in their place. For the ear nothing: but I suppose that the increased speed that the petrol offers is, for most, sufficient compensation. Not, however, for me, who have an old-fashioned notion that for the high road, as opposed to a track or rails, the speed that horses may attain is speed enough. The glory of motion as celebrated by De Quincey is as much of that glory as most of us sinners are entitled to. I have an uneasy feeling that I have not earned the right to dash along at twenty-five to thirty-five miles an hour,—that we ought not to go faster than the horse,—although I should be puzzled to say exactly what it was I had left undone that would qualify me to do so. But the feeling is there, none the less, and it is none the weaker for being vague.

What I sometimes wonder is, would De Quincey, were he able to sit beside Mr. Jarrott, or that terrible Belgian, Jenatzy, have an increased sense of speed, or would he still pin his faith to horses to convey most profoundly the impression of velocitous travel? Because it is not, of course, always the fastest thing that most suggests fastness. A moderately hasty omnibus, for example, rolling down Whitehall, would seem to be moving with a greater impetus than the hansom that overtook it; and I can conceive it possible that a runaway stage coach, going at only fifteen miles an hour, might have a far more impressive onset than a motor-car going at forty miles an hour under perfect control. If so, that would justify De Quincey.

But the comparison would be fair only if the observer were horse-blind. It would be the horse that would really convey the impression of speed ; not the speed itself. The speed of a motor-car, even at forty miles an hour, one would not notice very vividly unless one were in its wind, so to speak ; but the speed of four horses plunging along, out of control, with a coach of people behind them, would seem to be terrific, because the eye would be trebly fed : fed with the actual quickness of the vehicle, so much quicker than usual ; fed with the alarm of the passengers ; but most of all fed with the fury and appalling madness of energy of the animals themselves, all so frantic and undisciplined. I have not seen many runaway horses, but all that I have seen filled me with a tightening alarm that I can still recall with the utmost vividness.

I doubt if a sculptor or painter, challenged to represent the most sublimely terrifying thing that human beings can meet, could do better than to mould or depict a frenzied horse. I believe that the horse is not only the noblest animal we know, but in its rage the most terrible. It is customary to say that the lion is the noblest creature, but the lion, for all his grandeur, has a furtive look ; and the tiger even more so ; while the elephant, for all his size, has just that touch of the grotesque which is fatal. But the horse is beautiful, and noble too. And it is all to his advantage as a symbol of terror that he is normally the kindly friend of man, in perfect subjection, and that his frenzy is an aberration. The contrast intensifies the emotion.

I should, however, be conveying a very false impression if these remarks upon the noble animal led anyone to suppose that I am either a horse man or even comfortable in a horse's presence. Quite the reverse. I am one to whom the horse is an unknown and perilous quantity. I have for horses and dogs an affection that most people seem to keep for their fellow-men ; but although with dogs I am

at home, I am totally at a loss to know how to deal with the larger creature. A horse's eye disquiets me: it has an expression of alarm that may at any moment be translated into action. I like to know where an animal is looking, and these bright, startled, liquid convexities never tell me.

I have been on a horse's back, it is true. I once hired a horse and rode it over the South Downs for a fortnight; but I never feel that there is true *vapour* between a horse and myself. I began too late. To understand horses and be understood by horses, one must be brought up with them. But for the great centaurs—the giants of the saddle—no one can have more admiration than I: a little perhaps, because they are so foreign, almost so astral, a people. I don't mean jockeys, who are mere riding automata without personalities; I mean the great hunting men with the noble and resonant names,—and of all of whom "characteristic anecdotes" (brave words!) are told,—the men celebrated by the glowing pen of "Nimrod"; Tom Assheton-Smith, and Hugo Meynell, and Sir Bellingham Graham, and Tom Sebright, and Mr. Osbaldeston, and Jack Musters, and John Mytton, and John Warde of Squerries.

When one reads the lives of the ordinary great men—statesmen, poets, divines, painters, and so forth—one can to a considerable extent put oneself in their place: the life described, although carried out to a high power, is still more or less one's own, is recognizable. But to read "Nimrod's" generous and spirited pages—to read of these mighty and wonderful horsemen—is (with me) to be transported to a kind of fairyland to which I am never likely really to penetrate, and where, if I did, I should be an alien and ashamed. That is why I think "Nimrod" one of the greatest of writers—because he takes me into an unattainable world and keeps me enchanted.

"When Jack Shirley was whipper-in to Mr. Smith,
he was riding an old horse called Gadsby (not much

the better for having been many years ridden by his master) over one of the worst fields in Leicestershire for a blown horse—between Tilton and Somerby—abounding with large anthills and deep, holding furrows. The old horse was going along at a good slapping pace, with his head quite loose, and down-hill at the time, whilst Jack was in the act of putting a lash to his whip, *having a large open clasp knife between his teeth at the time!*"

That is the kind of thing that "Nimrod" tells, and what could be more different from the ordinary routine of a literary man!

Or take Captain Bridges of the Hambledon Hunt:

"Being out one day with the foxhounds, he saw two gentlemen parleying with a farmer in a gateway, who refused to let them pass through it. The Captain rode up to them, and asked what was the matter. 'Why,' said one of the gentlemen, 'this farmer says he will murder the first man who attempts to go into his field.' 'Does he?' said the Captain; 'then here goes, life for life,' and immediately charged him. The fellow aimed a desperate blow at his head with a very heavy stick, which, in spite of the velvet cap, would have felled him to the ground, if he had not had the good fortune to have avoided it; when, taking to his heels, the coward fled, with the Captain after him, and absolutely crept into a large covered drain to avoid him. 'Who-whoop!' said the Captain, 'I've run him to ground, by G—d!'"

"Nimrod" tells us, later, in proof of the Captain's humour, that the last time he saw him out he told him he had been severely attacked by gout in the early morning, but, "determined to hunt," he had taken two strong calomel pills and sixty drops of colchicum; on the top of this he had put a glass of hot gin and water on the road to covert, "to keep things in their place." There's a captain for you! It was of this gallant sportsman, by the way, that "Nimrod" uses the admirably descriptive phrase:

"the nightingale had oftener heard him than he had the nightingale."

A tired journalist, worn with town, looking out for a hero, an exemplar—could he do better than choose Captain Bridges? Yet how impossible!

But of the harum-scarum hunting man Mytton is the blazing example. Even less like the daily routine of a journalist and literary hack was the career of this inspired rake-hell, who thought so little of money that he could be traced in his morning walks by dropped bundles of banknotes; who fought dogs with his teeth, on equal terms, and won; who drank six bottles of port daily, the first while shaving; who spent £10,000 in getting into Parliament, and occupied his seat only half an hour; who consented to go to Oxford only on condition that he was never asked to open a book; who jumped toll-gates in his gig; who owned and hunted two packs, and once came in at the death, after many hours' riding, with three broken ribs; who set a spring trap for his chaplain one Sunday morning, and, having caught him, thought the frolic amply atoned for by a bottle of Madeira; who thrashed all who offended him, and afterwards gave them a guinea; and who, when some kind of compromise was offered him by his lawyer which would save an estate from the hammer and produce him an income of £6,000 a year, remarked, "I wouldn't give a damn to live on £6,000 a year." Surely if unlikelihood of imitation is a measure of admiration (as it is), here is a hero indeed for a quill-driver who must keep office hours!

Ever since I can remember I have been fascinated by the life of John Mytton, although there is no real pleasure to be taken in it. The spectacle of the riotous spendthrift, the man whose only enemy is himself, as we say, is melancholy enough, however we consider it. Why not, then, leave poor Mytton's ghost un vexed? Because, I would say, he was great. In his way he was among the giants. England has

produced many madcaps, many wastrels of genius ; to go the pace recklessly, to sow wild oats, seeming to be more easy with our youth than with those of any nation, the result probably of security and wealth and the absence of that enforced military service which reminds the young Continental so forcibly that he is but a cog in a great machine, together with a certain tendency in the national character (observed once very acutely by Falstaff) to overdo our amusements.

It is not so long since Mytton died : 1834—the same year in which died Charles Lamb. He was born in the year that saw Lamb contributing poems to Coleridge's first volume, 1796, and it is not uninteresting to reflect how different were the two lives that were simultaneously to pass in London and at Halston, Mytton's home in Shropshire. Mytton's father died when his son was two, and probably the boy's ruin was a result, for his mother was fond to folly, and no one opposed his will. He went to Westminster and Harrow, being expelled from both, and came of age to £60,000 in ready money and an income of £10,000. For a short time he was a cornet in the 7th Hussars, but on his majority he resigned, and took to country pursuits. It was in 1819 that he brought himself to sit in Parliament for half an hour ; in 1820 came the dissolution, and he legislated no more. He married twice—his first wife died, and his second left him. His hounds, his racehorses, his cellars, his coverts, and his friends all did their work, and by 1830 he was a debtor in hiding in Calais. In 1834 he was dead of delirium tremens in the King's Bench Prison. He was buried in the private chapel of his old home, and his funeral was attended by half Shropshire, for the country-people idolised him. His life was written by his friend " Nimrod," who also had come upon disaster, although not so luridly, and was also a refugee at Calais. It is a curious, warm-hearted, tolerant book, unique in the language—the kindest biography that

a rake-hell ever had, and a wonderful memorial of the three-bottle days that are past. Now and then the gallant "Nimrod" sweats something very like blood in his efforts to palliate his friend's enormities, but he almost succeeds.

Mytton, looked at from one point of view, was just a criminal detrimental, wickedly selfish, shamelessly wasteful. That is true enough. But he rose to such heights in this wastefulness, and he gave himself to folly with such generous abandon, that he compels admiration. His follies, indeed, were (as often happens) largely runaway virtues. Bravery in the hands of a young fool quickly becomes recklessness; generosity turns to extravagance; conviviality degenerates into drunkenness. Mytton had none of the petty vices, the dirty little mean self-protective thoughts that seem to be consistent with the highest reputations. He was open and without *arrière pensée*. Having well thrashed an opponent, he gave him (as I have said) a guinea. With more judgment he would have been a great country gentleman. Instead, he is perhaps the biggest madcap fool in English history.

He was certainly the only one whose life was published with aquatints by Alken and Rawlins. Those acquaintants—how well I remember them! I saw the book first—where, I forget now—when I was quite a child, and some of the pictures burned their way into my memory. John Mytton returning from Doncaster races in a chaise with the windows open—I should remember that nightpiece for ever, even if in counting his winnings he was not amused to see the wind catch the banknotes and whirl them into the void. John Mytton riding his bear into the drawing-room, to the consternation of his guests. Who that first saw that picture in childhood could ever forget it? Mytton was very amusing with this bear, and once, after making George Underhill, the horse-dealer, exceedingly drunk, he put him to bed with it and two bulldogs. (He had an

inexhaustibly pretty fancy.) John Mytton forcing the leader of his tandem to jump a gate, but being foiled by the wheeler. John Mytton shooting ducks on the ice under the moon, crawling after them in nothing but his night-shirt, gun in hand. John Mytton setting this same night-shirt, or another, on fire to cure the hiccoughs.

And lastly, the spirited picture of the famous incident of the guest and the gig, by which, in many persons' minds, Mytton lives. "Was you ever much hutt of being upset in a gig?" asks the genial John of a friend whom he is driving in one of those vehicles. "No, thank God," says the unsuspecting man, forgetting with whom he had to deal, "for I never was upset in one." "What," replied Mytton, "never upset in a gig? What a damned slow fellow you must have been all your life!" and, "running his near wheel up the bank, over they both went." The story contains John Mytton's greatness. The superb foolhardiness of it; the excellent *bonhomie* of it; the swiftness of the catastrophe, impulse and action being one; the recklessness not only of his own life, but his friend's, for the prosperity of the joke:—these would be impossible to a small man.

If Had Mytton been a soldier, with such a disregard of danger and rapidity of thought and deed, his monument might be at this moment in St. Paul's Cathedral and his statue in Trafalgar Square—and he no different in character. But fate designed that he should squander his gifts and do no one the faintest service. More, it was admitted by his biographer that Mytton was drunk for seven years on end, a term extended to twelve years by another witness. There is here a waste of power and a perversion of fine, generous instincts that I leave to Dr. Pangloss and other apologists for this universe to explain away.

A SALE*

THE sale of the late Sir John Day's pictures was particularly interesting to me, since it happens that I have the satisfaction of sharing that good judge's predilections. His gods are for the most part mine. I, too, would choose for my walls (if I had any) Corots and Daubignys, Marises and Mauves, Millets and Bosbooms, Roussans and De Wintis. I, too, prefer the wistful crepuscule to the vivid noon. Hence I entered Christie's at a quarter to one on 13 May, 1909, and took the place that a boy messenger was keeping for me, with feelings of peculiar excitement and enthusiasm.

The seated company at a big sale at Christie's is as unchanging as an ordinary congregation. A few strangers may be there, looking in for the first time, but the rest, the regular attendants, the pew-owners, so to speak, know each other, and are known to the auctioneer, so that the bids of those who engage in the contest are, as at most sales where dealers congregate, often imperceptible to others, although to him clear as speech.

We opened modestly. Lot 1 was a seascape by De Bock, and the first bid was five guineas. It little thought, that bid, what a huge total would be built upon it. The De Bock reached 160 guineas, and then made room for a Bosboom. Bosboom is a modern Dutch painter, now dead (you may

* From *Old Lamps for New*.

see his palette in the Museum at the Hague), whose ecclesiastical interiors have a grave and sombre beauty that I suppose has never been equalled. Among collectors he is becoming more and more desired.

After the Bosbooms we came to the Corots, of which there were a round dozen, and a little anticipatory flutter was perceptible in the room. There are better Corots in the world than Sir John Day possessed; but this procession of twelve of the tender, serene canvases from the Ville d'Avray studio was very wonderful, and one lost the bidding in the quietude of the paint. Among them were three early works, when the artist liked a more rarefied air than later in life. And these one has to know in order to realize fully not only how superb Corot was, but how bewilderingly blind were the connoisseurs of that day to let him languish as they did. Of course, it is easy to recognize his greatness now, when the very name Corot carries magic with it; it is difficult to put one's self back into those times when it meant nothing, and to see the pictures with eyes unassisted by tradition; and yet I find it hard to believe that if one of these early works had come to me suddenly out of a clear sky I should have failed to be arrested by it.

Well, there we sat, packed together like excursionists, while the giant picture-dealers of Europe fought for these pacific landscapes—these sweet lark songs among the light clouds of the grey day, to quote Corot's own description of his ideal—until the dozen had reached a total of nearly £12,000.

To Corot succeeded his friend Charles Daubigny, whose vast and luminous "Harvest Moon" produced the instant bid of 1,000 guineas, to which, after a long interval of silence, it fell. His "Bords de l'Oise," a great wet landscape, with Daubigny's stern, sincere beauty drenching it, brought 1,800 guineas. Others followed, and then five rich men—Diaz, also a citizen of the white village of R-

whose home you may see to-day, with a tablet on the gate; almost opposite the rambling house of Jean Francois Millet. The first of these Diazes was an evening picture with cattle coming down to drink beneath a stormy sky; not unlike the superb moorland scene from the same brush which Mr. Salting left to the National Gallery. It began at fifty guineas and reached 850. (By the way, the starting of safe pictures at fifty and a hundred guineas would be a pleasant task for a reduced gentleman of the Captain Jackson type, who, able no longer to collect, wished still to sun himself in the illusion of prosperity and connoisseurship. To make in a loud voice a bid of 100 or 500 guineas, whether one has such a sum in the bank or not, must do something for the spirit. It cannot leave one quite where one was.)

After Diaz, Jules Dupré, another great and sincere painter of landscapes, a direct disciple of Constable (who was a founder of the Barbizon school) and the friend of Corot, Rousseau, and their friends. It was Dupré who said beautifully of Corot that he might—it was within the bounds of possibility—be replaced as a painter, but never as a man. There were five Duprés, upon the first of which a sanguine friend of mine, unconscious of the growing value of this master, had placed the sum of £100, for which I was to try and get it for him. It was too little, I had suggested; but no, Dupré was not much considered, he fondly replied. His face fell when I told him how the first bid had been 200 guineas and the last 520.

It is one of the charms of Christie's that you never can tell. Pictures fetch every day unexpected prices, both high and low. Good pictures slip through, taking the room unawares, and bad pictures occasionally reach absurd figures, for various reasons. This Dupré, however, was fine. I once bought at Christie's for two guineas two water-colour drawings attributed to Clarkson Stanfield, and, behold, on stripping them to be framed again, one was revealed by a minute history on its back, to be a David Cox

worth many times what I gave for it. Let no one despair of a bargain, even when all the dealers from the Continent and all the dollars from America are present. The dealers' idea, it must be remembered, is to sell again, and they buy accordingly. Many a good picture does not appeal to the commercial eye. At this sale, for instance, five examples of the, to me, impressive art of Georges Michel, the rich and sombre painter of windmills, a French Crome, brought together only a little more than 100 guineas, while on the second or water-colour day, there were many lots that went far too cheaply. In a sale where competition is concentrated upon the great works the humble collector has often a chance.

After the Duprés came the Harpignies', in which Sir John Day was peculiarly rich. This grand old man, who is still (1911) hale, at the age of 92, has been painting all his life in oil and water-colour, and has never put forth a meretricious or hurried thing. He is the link between Barbizon and the present day. Less charming, perhaps, than the greatest men of that school, he is more of a realist, and trees and foliage have no closer or more inspired student. His great lack, I suppose, is tenderness; everything else he has. It is good to know that in this fine, sure hand the blood still flows; that this artist, who has loved the world of beauty so long, is still able to enjoy it; and that he can watch himself becoming an Old Master, and the quarry of the collector, while he is still living.

The old age of artists was a theme on which Hazlitt wrote one of his best essays, and just now, were he to be still among us, he would find new subjects for study—for not only is there Harpignies at ninety-two in France, but Sir John Tenniel at ninety-two in London; while it is only a year or so since William Callow died at ninety-six, and W. P. Frith at ninety-one. An artist—particularly an open air artist, like Harpignies and Callow—has, one would say, every opportunity of attaining to a great age. Given

a strong constitution and the absence of such harassments as, for example, bowed prematurely the head of Haydon, there is little to put a strain upon his faculties or physique. By the conditions of his art he cannot work at night. He is a daylight man ; he lives upon light and air ; he is in direct *rappoport* with the sun ; he watches the skies (and how few of us do that !) ; his eye, searching for beauty and knowing beauty when it sees it, is constantly being rewarded in the best way—and that must make for the content that in its turn must make for longevity. When the painter's temperament has both placidity and simplicity, it must be the happiest of all.

Harpignies' prices at Sir John Day's sale were far in advance of anything he had previously made at Christie's. The largest picture produced 1,800 guineas, and the eleven 6,270 guineas. A week later, however, the old man's English record rose to 2000 guineas at the Cuthbertson sale.

So far all the important work had been French, but now (the arrangement was alphabetical) came in an illustrious Dutchman, another Nestor—Joseph Israels, still happily active at the age of 87. Mr. Preyer, of Amsterdam, who hitherto had been silent, began now to be busy. For the most important picture, "Bonheur Maternel," 1,080 guineas were paid, and for five others 2,470 guineas—among them "The Fisher," which fell to Mr. Drucker and added yet another to a collection of Israels which has overflowed both into our National Gallery and into the City Museum at Amsterdam.

After the "Shepherdess" of Charles Jacque, who painted sheep more brilliantly than any hand ever before, had been sold for 1,680 guineas, we entered upon a longer Dutch interlude, filled by the three Marises, Mauve, and Mesdag ; and once again the room fluttered, for the name of Maris grows more powerful every year. There is, indeed, perhaps no recent prolific painter so certain of a great financial future as the late James Maris. On every

sale his prices rise, both for oil and water-colour. His brother Matthew I do not set against him in rivalry, because Matthew stands apart. He is an exotic, the most fastidiously select painter of our day, beyond Whistler even. Matthew Maris is alone: a reserved half-mystical exile, who has always painted as little rather than as much as possible, and has never taken his brush in hand but to produce a masterpiece unique and haunting. To him we come soon.

James Maris was as abundant as Matthew has been restrained; and this makes the huge figures that his work now commands, and will, I believe, increasingly command, the more interesting. Sir John Day had fifteen of his oils and thirteen of his water-colours, all of which he bought during the artist's life (only recently ended) through dealers at modest enough sums, averaging for the oils something about £80, and for the water-colours £40. At the sale the oils averaged £1,000 and the water-colours £400. The highest sum paid for a single oil was 1,600 guineas for a view of Dordrecht. That was large, but the following week, at the Cuthbertson sale, a James Maris brought 4,000 guineas.

These prices may sound absurd, but they are not. An artist now and then becomes the fashion and excites competition beyond his deserts; but not so James Maris. James Maris was a great painter of skies, a great painter of riverside towns, a great painter of his native land. He saw things largely and painted them largely (now and then a little in the manner of the most beautiful landscape in the world—Vermeer's "View of Delft"), and these facts are now known. His future, I fancy, is as secure as that of Constable and Crome. It gave me immense pleasure to see the brave, candid painter so popular.

And then Matthew Maris and the first thrill of the sale. James's rich and buoyant canvases, one by one on the easel, and the competition of the bidders had set pulses agreeably beating; but we

had not broken into applause. The first applause—no small thing at Christie's, where impassivity is cultivated not only as a gentlemanly English habit but also from motives of commercial self-protection—the first applause was won by Lot 77.

What was Lot 77? The quietest little red and brown picture you ever saw, 8½ by 11½ inches; "a town [in the words of the catalogue] on the farther bank of a river; standing well above the red roofs of the houses are seen four windmills; a bridge crosses the river on the right; a barge and raft lying against the bank; a peasant woman in the foreground." Such is "The Four Mills" of Matthew Maris, that strange, exclusive genius, most remarkable of the three Maris brothers. Matthew was born in 1835, and is therefore now an old man. He lives in lodgings in London, far from Holland and its mills and canals and sweeping sky; solitary and sad, with a few marvellous classics to his name, and on the walls of his sitting-room some dreadful oleographs which he will not ask the landlady to remove for fear of hurting her feelings. Here he lives, painting a little every day,—but they are pictures for no one to see,—and writing (I am told) some of the best letters of our time. The old age of artists! Hazlitt truly knew what to write about.

Matthew Maris has lived in England ever since he left Paris after the war. He even carried a rifle in that struggle, but it is characteristic of his gentle nature that he refused to load it. When he gave up painting for the public I know not. But the latest work that I know—that exquisite picture entitled "Butterflies"—a little blue girl lying in the grass, which seems to make much of both Whistler and Albert Moore insincere and even unnecessary, is dated 1874. It was exhibited in London again in 1909, with sixteen other of his works, including the adorable "Enfant Couchée" and one of the low-toned Montmartre souvenirs.

Such is the painter of Lot 77, which left his easel,

in 1871 and was then sold with difficulty for 100 francs, or four English sovereigns, or twenty American dollars, to M. Goupil, of Paris, who, it is recorded, threw in a little friendly lecture on the folly of painting "such unsaleable stuff." Well, here it was now, Lot 77. "The Four Mills," thirty-eight years older, and beautiful beyond description, with an appeal to the deeper nature of the connoisseur such as I cannot put into words. "Why," I asked an artist, as we stood before it on the day before the sale, "why is it so good?" "Partly," he said, "because he never wanted to show how cleverly he could paint. Everything has its true value. It is so simple and so sincere." But, this of course, is not all. There is also the curious and exquisite alchemy of the painter's mind; and how much of the painter is in this particular masterpiece may be gathered from the circumstance that (as I happen to know) it does not represent any real Dutch town at all, but was an invention of his own. The Four Mills exist only on this canvas and in Matthew Maris's strange and beautiful brain.

Lot 77. We have seen what the dealer gave the artist for it—100 francs. It then passed to Lord Powerscourt, and it was from his collection that Sir John Day bought it for £120. It was now, therefore, being sold for the third time.

"Lot 77. What shall I say for a start, gentlemen?"

"A thousand guineas? Thank you. A thousand guineas for this picture."

"Eleven hundred."

"Twelve."

"Thirteen."

"Fourteen."

"Fifteen."

"Sixteen."

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen fifty."

"Eighteen."

"Eighteen fifty."

HARVEST HOME

"Nineteen." (The red roofs are getting redder,
the brown mills browner! The peace of it all !)

"Two thousand guineas."

"And one hundred."

"Two hundred."

"Three hundred."

"Four hundred."

"Five hundred."

"Six hundred."

"Seven hundred."

"Eight hundred."

"Nine hundred." (How quiet and beautiful,
and above all price, all struggle, all commercialism,
the picture is !)

"Three thousand guineas."

"And one hundred."

"Two hundred and fifty." (Strange reading for
old Matthew Maris in his London lodgings to-morrow
morning !)

"Three hundred."

A pause.

"For three thousand three hundred guineas."

A longer pause.

"For three thousand three hundred guineas."

And the hammer falls and the room vibrates
with the tapping of sticks and clapping of hands ;
and "The Four Mills" disappears, bound for the
house of a dealer, who was to sell it, in time, to
an English connoisseur, whom, upon my soul, I
envy. He is the right kind of connoisseur, too ;
no Peer he, or National Gallery Trustee enamoured
of American dollars, but a simple gentleman who has
already given pictures to the nation and intends
(I am told) to give more—perhaps this very Dutch
masterpiece.

Lot 78. "Feeding Chickens." This also is by
Matthew Maris, and was painted in 1872. "A
Girl in buff dress and blue cap, is feeding chickens
with some grain which she holds in the fold of her
white apron ; foliage background." Such is the

Christie description, and it serves to recall the little enchanted scene to mind ; but it says nothing of the mysterious romantic feeling of it, or the richness and delicacy and sweetness of it, or even of the fascinating mediaeval city in the distance.

For this Sir John Day gave £300, and at the sale it began at a thousand guineas and reached three, falling also to a Scotch purse—and it is now, I hear, in Canada. Two hundred and sixty-four thousand six hundred saxpences never went bang to better purpose. This second picture, by the way, was painted from the same model that lends such charm to "The Girl at the Well," feeding pigeons, in the M'Culloch collection.

Six William Marises¹ follow, and then we come to another Dutch painter whose work is every year more and more desired of collectors—Anton Mauve, the pastoral poet of Holland, who did for its cows and sheep and blue-coated peasants what Israels has done for its fisher-folk and James Maris for its skies. The place that Mauve's sincere and modest art has won in the eyes of the best connoisseurs is a refreshing proof that honesty in painting is ultimately the best policy, although the honest artist may have every opportunity of starving before the tide turns his way.

Sir John Day had eight Mauves in oil and seven in water-colour. The first oil, "Troupeau de Moutons sous Bois," he bought in 1888, immediately after the artist's death. It was a picture of which Mauve was very fond ; Sir John Day gave £150 for it. At the sale it began at 500 guineas, and after fierce competition it was secured by Mr. Reinhart, of Chicago, for 2,700 guineas. Pictures with sheep in them, it has been said, always find buyers ; but when the sheep are painted as these are, not with the *brio* of Jacque, but so quietly and lovingly . . . !

¹ William Maris also is coming to his own. On June 30, 1911, one of his pastoral scenes brought £3,200 at Christie's.

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Mauve, like all the greatest painters, took what he found around him and made it beautiful. He was one of the artists of whom the Creator must be most proud, in whom He must take most delight, for his whole life was given up to the demonstration of how beautiful everything is—and never with the faintest whisper of the words, "and how skilful am I!" Never. Anton Mauve stands with the greatest in his sincerity, his genius, and his self-efacement. American collectors have always appreciated him, while his village of Laren, in Holland has long been a settlement of American painters.

Our first thrill was with the Matthew Maris; the next was with J. F. Millet's "Goose Maiden"—one of the most lovely pieces of colour that can ever have leaned against Christie's history post. The merest trifle in size— $12\frac{1}{4}$ by $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches—an old master—a jewel of paint—from the moment it was born. Millet was no less a great colourist than a great draughtsman and a great lover of the earth, and here, in this tiny canvas, all his virtues meet. Sir John Day paid heavily for it in his time, but its new owner paid more heavily still. The bidding began at 500 guineas and mounted by hundreds to 5,000.

After the Millet the most beautiful picture was a little landscape by Rousseau, the painter who left his studio at Barbizon to the villagers as a chapel. "River Scene: with a man fishing from a punt" was the description; but that omitted the wonder of the work—the evening light and stillness. It literally hushed the room. This picture is now in the National Gallery, for all to see. A week later (observe what it is to have the Christie habit) I saw another Rousseau with a richer but not more beautiful afternoon light in it, and some trees painted as only Rousseau could paint them, which brought 4,600 guineas. (If forests can think, if villages have thoughts, what must be the reflection of Fontainebleau and Barbizon when they receive the news of these Christie contests!)

And so the day finished, some £75,000 having changed hands in three hours—a large sum for a little paint. A little paint, do I say? That is true; but a new world, too—a world of wistful beauty. And that, of course, cannot be appraised: it is dear at a five-pound note, if you do not want it—if your taste is unlike Sir John Day's; it is cheap at all you have, if you desire it sufficiently.

"GINNETT'S"*

I WONDER what connotation the word "Ginnett's"—which was in my early years the most magical word in the vocabulary—has for most of the readers of this book. Probably none at all. To me, however, it stood and stands for everything which to London children of a century ago was conveyed by the intoxicating name of Astley, and to provincial and village children in the favoured districts to-day is conveyed by the name of Sanger. For Ginnett's Circus (the "g" is soft) near Park Crescent, Brighton, was the only place of entertainment permitted to us by parental law, and to visit it was to come nearer the highest felicity than I have ever been since. That was thirty and more years ago. Brighton has no circus to-day, but a "Hippodrome" with two music-hall performances nightly. Such are the stones that this generation is glad to swallow in exchange for the old nutritious bread!

The Ginnetts (I assure you it is almost impossible to write, for I can smell the warm tan and sawdust at this moment) were an interesting race. The founder was one of Napoleon's soldiers, who carried, not a marshal's baton, but a tent-pole, in his knapsack; and directly the wars were over joined the great Andrew Ducrow at Lyons. Andrew was the son of Peter Ducrow, the "Flemish Hercules," one of whose feats was to lie on his back and support a platform on which negligently huddled eighteen grenadiers. Another was to hold in his teeth a table covered with

* From *One Day and Another*.

his children, most illustrious and capable of whom was certainly Andrew, who from the age of three was trained rigorously to tumble, vault, dance on the tight-rope, ride bareback, and in fact become a circus utility man in the highest sense of the phrase. The boy developed a commercial instinct as well as terrific muscles, and succeeded where his father failed, becoming the most famous circus proprietor in England at a time when circuses were popular, and leaving a fortune of £60,000. Him, as I have said, Ginnett *père*, home from the wars, joined at Lyons, later accompanying him to England, and making and saving money so industriously that he was able to start a travelling show of his own—the first "Ginnett's Circus."

The soldier had three sons, John, Fred, and George, who recently died, and whose death has suggested these reminiscences; and each of them became circus proprietors too, and carried the fear of wild animals over the country. John's menagerie came to grief in Morecambe Bay; but Fred and George, save for a fire now and then, did well, George having his headquarters at Bristol and Fred at Brighton. Of Fred's beginnings I can tell nothing, although, as will be seen later, I ought to be the first authority on them, but the foundation of George's success was a timely gift of £100 from an admiring spectator of his tumbling. This sum he managed with such skill that it made him a capitalist, and his circuses came to be known all over England, France, and India. The last time I saw one of them was in a field at Chichester, in, I think, 1903.

But it was brother Fred's circus (I can hear the thud of the hoofs against the wooden ring) that I knew as I shall never know another, and it was Fred's dashing sons, Claude and Fred and Albert, who were the heroes of my youngest days. The old man had given up appearing in the ring, except in the kindly character, at Christmas time, of distributor of the prizes on those special nights on which the

programmes were transformed into lottery tickets, and one was in danger of suddenly becoming the owner of a live sucking pig, or a leg of mutton, or a goose, or a bottle of wine. The programmes, I remember, were scented, and I still believe theirs to be the most exquisite perfume that is distilled ; but I have never met it since.

And his sons ! There was nothing they could not do ; and I have even detected their sacred lineaments under the chalk and paint of the acrobatic clowns. Claude's great feat, however, was the impersonation of Dick Turpin in his ride to York on the blackest of Black Besses, with circumstances of humour and effrontery at the gate-houses on the road, and an end too sad to think of even now. Fred, who in those days had a handsome, imperious, spoiled face, was the dashing exponent of the jockey act, in which he at once flung away saddle and bridle with a fine contempt, rode perilously on the horse's very tail, and ended, amid a fusillade of whip-cracks and shouts from the whole company, massed at the entrances for the purpose, in leaping to the animal's highly resined back and rushing round the ring imperturbably, with arms folded, at an angle of forty-five degrees. Great days ! Great nights !

Albert is less vivid in my memory—he was, if I remember aright, less of a centaur than the others ; a cynical humorist of the ring, with songs and recitations and caustic jests on life ; but Madame Ginnett, the stepmother of this dazzling triumvirate, her I can see at this moment with the utmost distinctness as, in an immaculate riding-habit, she put a proud and pawing stallion through the paces of the Haute Ecole, gracefully inclining her tall hat to applause that, as is often the case with this particular performance, was almost too well regulated. What a mother to have ! I used to think as I sat there. What a father ! How different from my own.

I speak now of the early eighteen-seventies. Fifteen years later, when old Fred Ginnett, having

given up his Park Crescent circus, was building another, more in the centre of Brighton—a forlorn hope, as it turned out, for the county towns of England by that time had become utterly sophisticated, and the canker of variety entertainments and melodramatic sensations had eaten into their vitals and ruined their appetite for the simpler and nobler fare of the ring—fifteen years later I met my ancient hero face to face and had a long talk with him on more or less level terms. We met by appointment, for the suggestion had been made to him that his career was worth putting into narrative form and I was the Boswell to do it. He was a thick-set little foreign-looking man, with a weather-beaten red face and very prominent eyes. He wore a tall hat on the back of his head, and a long overcoat almost to his feet, with an astrachan collar, and he held a cigar in fat ringed fingers. He buttonholed me in the middle of his arena for an hour or so, and told me story after story of his life, as specimen bricks, so to speak, of the biographical edifice which he had contemplated. But they did not go well into another man's prose: at least, they would not go into mine. My ancient hero told them with spirit and an immense chuckling appreciation, but it was not transitive: the laughter was in the first teller. And so the project dropped; but had the whole family come under toll, I have no doubt I could have made from them a real book, and perhaps have fixed the circus temperament.

Fred Ginnett died soon after, and now George has gone. And they died none too soon, for their old and romantic profession had come upon evil days, and horses, by which they lived, are under a cloud. Peace to their ashes! Whether or not Claude and Albert have circuses of their own to maintain the magic name, I do not know; but from time to time I see the name of the younger Fred on music-hall posters. So does the glory depart, and so dangerous and disillusioning is it to grow up!

MUSINGS FROM ROTTERDAM*

I THINK one may see barges and canal boats in greater variety at Rotterdam than anywhere else. One curious thing to be noticed as they lie at rest in the canals is the absence of men. A woman is always there; her husband only rarely. The only visible captain is the fussy, shrewish little dog which, suspicious of the whole world, patrols the boat from stem to stern, and warns you that it is against the law even to look at his property. I hope his bite is not equal to his bark.

Every barge has its name. What the popular style was seven years ago, when I was here last, I cannot remember; but to-day it is "Wilhelmina." English suburban villas have not a greater variety of fantastic names than the canal craft of Holland; nor, with all our monopoly of the word "home," does the English suburban villa suggest more compact coziness than one catches gleams of through their cabin windows or down their companions.

Spring cleaning goes on here, as in the Dutch houses all the year round, and the domiciliary part of the vessels is spotless. Every bulwark has a washing tray that can be fixed or detached in a moment. "It's a fine day, let us kill something," says the Englishman; "Here's an odd moment, let us wash something," says the Dutch vrouw.

In some of the Rotterdam canals the barges are so packed that they lie touching each other, with their

* From *A Wanderer in Holland*.

burghes flying all in the same direction, as the vanes of St. Sepulchre's in Holborn cannot do. How they ever get disentangled again and proceed on their free way to their distant homes is a mystery. But in the shipping world incredible things can happen at night.

One does not, perhaps, in Rotterdam realise all at once that every drop of water in these city-bound canals is related to every other drop of water in the other canals of Holland, however distant. From any one canal you can reach in time every other. The canal is really much more the high road of the country than the road itself. The barge is the Pickford van of Holland. Here we see some of the secret of the Dutch deliberateness. A country which must wait for its goods until a barge brings them has every opportunity of acquiring philosophic phlegm.

After a while one gets accustomed to the ever-present canal and the odd spectacle (to us) of masts in the streets and sails in the fields. All the Dutch towns are amphibious, but some are more watery than others.

The Dutch do not use their wealth of water as we should. They do not swim in it, they do not race on it, they do not row for pleasure at all. Water is their servant, never a light-hearted companion.

I can think of no more reposeful holiday than to step on board one of these barges wedged together in a Rotterdam canal, and never lifting a finger to alter the natural course of events—to accelerate or divert—be carried by it to, say, Harlingen, in Friesland : between the meadows ; under the noses of the great black and white cows ; past herons fishing in the rushes ; through little villages with dazzling milk-cans being scoured on the banks, and the good-wives washing, and saturnine smokers in black velvet slippers passing the time of day ; through big towns, by rows of sombre houses seen through a delicate screen of leaves ; under low bridges crowded with children ; through narrow locks ; ever moving, moving

Certain things in Holland are dear beyond all understanding. At The Hague, for example, we drank Eau d'Evian, a very popular bottled water for which in any French restaurant one expects to pay a few pence ; and when the bill arrived this simple fluid cut such a dashing figure in it that at first I could not recognise it at all. When I put the matter to the landlord, he explained that the duty made it impossible for him to charge less than f. 1.50 (or half a crown) a bottle ; but I am told that his excuse was too fanciful. None the less, half a crown was the charge, and apparently no one objects to pay it. The Dutch, on pleasure or eating bent, are prepared to pay anything. One would expect to get a reasonable claret for such a figure ; but not in Holland. Wine is good there, but it is not cheap. Only in one hotel—and that in the unspoiled north, at Groningen—did I see wine placed automatically upon the table, as in France.

Rotterdam must have changed for the worse under modern conditions ; for it is no longer as it was in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's day. From Rotterdam in 1716 she sent the Countess of Mar a pretty account of the city : "All the streets are paved with broad stones, and before the meanest artificers' doors seats of various coloured marbles, and so neatly kept that, I will assure you, I walked all over the town yesterday, *incognita*, in my slippers, without receiving one spot of dirt ; and you may see the Dutch maids washing the pavement of the street with more application than ours do our bed-chambers. The town seems so full of people, with such busy faces, all in motion, that I can hardly fancy that it is not some celebrated fair ; but I see it is every day the same.

"The shops and warehouses are of a surprising neatness and magnificence, filled with an incredible quantity of fine merchandise, and so much cheaper than what we see in England, I have much ado to persuade myself I am still so near it. Here is neither dirt nor beggary to be seen. One is not shocked

with those loathsome cripples, so common in London, nor teased with the importunities of idle fellows and wenches, that choose to be nasty and lazy. The common servants and the little shopwomen here are more nicely clean than most of our ladies ; and the great variety of neat dresses (every woman dressing her head after her own fashion) is an additional pleasure in seeing the town."

The claims of business have now thrust aside many of the little refinements described by Lady Mary, her description of which has but to be transferred to some of the smaller Dutch towns to be, however, in the main still accurate. But what she says of the Dutch servants is true everywhere to this minute. There are none more fresh and capable; none who carry their lot with more quiet dignity. Not the least part of the very warm hospitality which is offered in Dutch houses is played by the friendliness of the servants.

Everyone in Holland seems to have enough; no one too much. Great wealth there may be among the merchants, but it is not ostentatious. Holland still seems to have no poor in the extreme sense of the word, no rags. Doubtless the labourers that one sees are working at a low rate, but they are probably living comfortably at a lower, and are not to be pitied except by those who still cherish the illusion that riches mean happiness. The dirt and poverty that exist in every English town and village are very uncommon. Nor does one see maimed, infirm or very old people, except now and then—so rarely as at once to be reminded of their rarity.

One is struck, even in Rotterdam, which is a peculiarly strenuous town, by the ruddy health of the people in the streets. In England, as one walks about, one sees too often the shadow of Death on this face and that; but in Holland it is difficult to believe in his power, the people have so prosperous, so permanent, an air.

That the Dutch die there is no doubt, for a funeral is an almost daily object, and the aanspreker is con-

tinually hurrying by ; but where are the dead ? The cemeteries are minute, and the churches have no churchyards. Of Death, however, when he comes the nation is very proud. The mourning customs are severe and enduring. No expense is spared in spreading the interesting tidings. It is for this purpose that the aanspreker flourishes in his importance and pomp. Draped heavily in black, from house to house he moves, wherever the slightest ties of personal or business acquaintanceship exist, and announces his news. A lady of Hilversum tells me that she was once formally the recipient of the message, " Please, ma'am, the baker's compliments, and he's dead," the time and place of the interment following. I said draped in black, but the aanspreker is not so monotonous an official as that. He has his subtleties, his nuances. If the deceased is a child, he adds a white roseite ; if a bachelor or a maid, he intimates the fact by degrees of trimming.

The aanspreker was once occasionally assisted by the huilebalk, but I am afraid his day is over. The huilebalk accompanied the aansprekers from house to house and wept on the completion of their sad message. He wore a wide-awake hat with a very large brim and a long-tailed coat. If properly paid, says my informant, real tears coursed down his cheeks ; in any case his presence was a luxury possible only to the rich.

The aanspreker is called in also at the other end of life. Assuming a more jocund air, he trips from house to house announcing little strangers.

Rotterdam's first claim to consideration, apart from its commercial importance, is that it gave birth to Erasmus, a bronze statue of whom stands in the Groote Market, looking down on the stalls of fruit. Erasmus of Rotterdam—it sounds like a contradiction in terms. Gherardt Gherardis of Rotterdam is a not dishonourable eponymy—and that was the reformer's true name ; but the fashion of the time led scholars to adopt a Hellenized, or Latinized, style. Erasmus Desiderius, his new name, means beloved and long

desired. Grotius, Barlaeus, Vossius, Arminius, all sacrificed local colour to smooth syllables. We should be very grateful that the fashion did not spread also to the painters. What a loss it would be had the magnificent rugged name of Rembrandt van Rhyn been exchanged for a smooth emasculated Latinism.

Rotterdam had another illustrious son whose work as little suggests his birthplace—the exquisite painter Peter de Hooch. According to the authorities he modelled his style upon Rembrandt and Fabritius, but the influence of Rembrandt is concealed from the superficial observer. De Hooch, whose pictures are very scarce, worked chiefly at Delft and Haarlem, and it was at Haarlem that he died in 1681. If one were put to it to find a new standard of aristocracy superior to accidents of blood or rank one might do worse than demand as the ultimate test the possession of either a Vermeer of Delft or a Peter de Hooch.

Peter de Hooch's "Store Cupboard," is the Christmas supplement carried out to its highest power—and by its inventor. The thousands of domestic scenes which have proceeded from this one canvas make the memory reel; and yet nothing has staled the prototype. It remains a sweet and genuine and radiant thing. De Hooch had two fetishes—a rich crimson dress or jacket and an open door. His compatriot Vermeer, whom he sometimes resembles, was similarly addicted to a note of blue.

No one has managed direct sunlight so well as De Hooch. The light in his rooms is the light of day. One can almost understand how Rembrandt and Gerard Dou got their concentrated effects of illumination; but how this omnipresent radiance streamed from De Hooch's palette is one of the mysteries. It is as though he did not paint light but found light on his canvas and painted everything else in its midst.

Rotterdam has a zoological garden which, although inferior to ours, is far better than that at Amsterdam, while it converts The Hague's Zoo into a travesty. Last spring the lions were in splendid condition.

They are well housed, but fewer distractions are provided for them than in Regent's Park. I found myself fascinated by the herons, who were continually soaring out over the neighbouring houses and returning like darkening clouds. In England, although the heron is a native, we rarely seem to see him; while to study him is extremely difficult. In Holland he is ubiquitous: both wild and tame.

More interesting still was the stork, whose nest is set high on a pinnacle of the buffalo house. He was building in the leisurely style of the British working man. He would negligently descend from the heavens with a stick. This he would lay on the fabric and then carefully perform his toilet, looking round and down all the time to see that everyone else was busy. Whenever his eye lighted upon a toddling child or a perambulator it visibly brightened. "My true work!" he seemed to say; "this nest building is a mere by-path of industry." After prinking and overlooking, and congratulating himself thus, for a few minutes, he would stroll off, over the housetops, for another stick. He was the unquestionable King of the Garden.

Why are there no heronries in the English public parks? And why is there no stork? The Dutch have a proverb, "Where the stork abides no mother dies in childbed." Still more, why are there no storks in France? The author of *Fécondité* should have imported them.

No Zoo, however well managed, can keep an ourang-outang long, and therefore one should always study that uncomfortably human creature whenever the opportunity occurs. I had great fortune at Rotterdam, for I chanced to be in the ourang-outang's house when his keeper came in. Entering the enclosure, he romped with him in a score of diverting ways. They embraced each other, fed each other, teased each other. The humanness of the creature was frightful. Perhaps our likeness to ourang-outangs (except for our ridiculously short arms, inadequate lower jaws and lack of hair) made him similarly uneasy.

MISS ANN INGLESIDE SEEKS AN OCCUPATION *

ANN was not long in learning that her father had lived alone for so long that there was literally nothing that she could do for him except be clever and listen well. She therefore turned her thoughts towards doing something for herself, and was not sorry when Mr. Ingleside asked her one morning at breakfast if she intended to work for her living.

"Not that I want any of the money," he said; "but everyone should do something, and if possible earn something. It makes you independent."

"I should love to do something," said Ann.

"Well," said Mr. Ingleside, "what can you do? Can you sing?"

Ann said she couldn't sing.

"Can you play the piano well enough to be a professional?"

Ann laughed.

"Can you act?"

Ann couldn't act for, I believe she said, nuts.

"Can you dance in bare feet?"

Ann laughed again.

"Can you paint?"

Ann couldn't paint—also for nuts.

"Do you want to write?"

Ann didn't want to write.

* From *Mr. Ingleside: an Entertainment*.

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" Well," said Mr. Ingleside, " you are abnormal. A freak. You must make your income by exhibiting yourself. 'The girl who doesn't want to write.' But," he added, " that's the end. We have exhausted the arts. Now we come to the lower walks of life open to women. Can you trim hats?"

Ann did not want to trim hats.

" Can you devise creations?"

Ann didn't want to do that.

" Can you teach?"

Ann shuddered.

" Can you read aloud to old ladies?"

Ann thought not.

" You are very limited," said her father. " I seem to have wasted a great deal of money at Millais House. You can't even drive, can you? They have lady *cochers* in Paris. It is very clear that whatever you decide to do must be preceded by more lessons. Well, I shall leave it to you to look about and tell me what you intend to try."

" Father," said Ann a few mornings later, " I'm on the track of a job."

" Nonsense," said Mr. Ingleside.

" Yes, listen. It's an advertisement which I answered."

" Answered?"

" Yes. You said every girl should earn her own living. Listen:

'To LOVERS OF DOGS.—A refined and entertaining home is offered to a lady who will help in looking after pedigree dogs. XX, Office of this paper.'

" Well," said Mr. Ingleside, " but what about earning your own living? I observe no reference to salary."

" But I should be relieving you of my board and lodgings," said Ann.

" Have I asked to be relieved?" Mr. Ingleside

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replied with an asthmatic wheeze and a futile effort to get any movement into his curling tail. "We go in," Mrs. Bonham-Hervey continued, "for toy poms, schipperkes, Japanese spaniels, and Yorkshire terriers. Major Bonham-Hervey, my husband, says they're insects and not dogs at all, but that's only his wit. They're darlings really, and my sister and I adore them."

They stopped at a white gate in the midst of a shrubbery. Ann opened it and followed the cart up a dark and damp drive, with weeds luxuriating all over it, to a small once white house from which the cement was peeling. In a deck-chair on the top step sat an elderly man with a furiously red face and a bristling grey moustache, reading a paper.

"Renton," said the lady, "this is Miss Ingleside."

The Major growled something which might have been "good morning," and watched his wife lead the mouse-trap behind the house in the direction of a raging medley of barking and yapping.

"I hope you'll like this place," said the Major. "I don't. Do you hear them? More like insects than dogs, I call them. My idea of a dog is a bloodhound or a Great Dane. Insects!"

"May I go and see them?" Ann asked.

"There's no one to stop you," said the Major: "but I wouldn't hasten that ordeal if I were you. The swine!"

"But why do you keep them if you so dislike them?" Ann asked, with the tactlessness of her years and nature.

The Major grew purple. "Because this is a damned ungrateful country," he said. "A parcel of mean hounds. Because its miserable half-pay has got to be eked out somehow. That's why. Do you suppose I'd live here at all if I could help it? In this wilderness? Not me. But toy poms and all the rest of it are profitable, and my wife is very clever with them. Do you play Bridge?"

The last question came so abruptly and with so

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little relation to what had preceded it that Ann was incapable at once of answering.

"Do you play Bridge?" the Major repeated, this time far more in the tone a choleric man uses to his wife than to a total stranger.

"No," said Ann, "I don't. I can play picquet, though, and bezique."

"Picquet and bezique! No good to me," said the Major. "And I told them to put Bridge in the advertisement, too. Fools! I never can get anything done as I want it. Do you learn card games easily?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so," said Ann.

He brightened a little.

"There's nothing to do here at night," he explained.

In the parlour, where they had lunch, Ann noticed that the carpet had patches of white thread in many places, and everything suggested a want of money, and the want of hope that often goes with it. Every time the door opened fresh dogs scampered in. Over her tinned tongue Ann learned what her duties would be. Miss Anstruther, Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister, it seemed, had helped with the dogs for some years ("Dogs, did you call them?" interpolated the Major, "I always call them insects, Miss Ingleside. My idea of a dog is a bloodhound or a Great Dane"). Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister was no longer strong enough for the fatigue of travelling to the shows as she used to do, and it was therefore necessary for a substitute to be found. The old way was for Mrs. Bonham-Hervey to stay at home and take charge of the kennels, while her sister travelled about with the exhibits and sat by their cages. But her sister was now compelled to give it up.

Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's sister, who had hair as solid and yellow as Mrs. Bonham-Hervey's, but was obviously older and less robust, corroborated. It was the most delightful life, she said. They were such darlings; it broke her heart to have to stop. But here she fluttered and twittered a little and re-

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plenished her tumbler from the decanter and the syphon—her heart was so weak. She had such constant sinkings. She set down her glass, and, lifting the swollen pug to her lap, exchanged an affectionate embrace with it. She then kissed three other dogs in turn, full on their mouths, as if to emphasize the perfection of the relationship between them and the household. Meanwhile, not to be outdone, Mrs. Bonham-Hervey presented Siegfried with scraps from the darker and stringier part of the tongue.

"You might have given Miss Ingleside something better than this," said the Major. "Miss Ingleside, I apologize for such a shabby meal. I'm sure," he resumed to his wife, "that I saw the butcher's cart drive up this morning."

Mrs. Bonham-Hervey threw Ann a glance intended at once to deprecate and explain the unreasonableness of men, and informed her husband that it was true that the butcher had been, but it was only to bring some odds and ends for Iseult, who, being about to add a number of valuable puppies to the stock-in-trade of the house, had been ordered by the vet to have nourishing food. "Poor Iseult!" she added.

"Yes," said her sister, "poor Iseult! The sweetest lady-dog that ever drew breath, Miss Ingleside, and the kindest of mothers."

"Iseult, I may tell you, Miss Ingleside," said the Major, "is in my opinion the most detestable little bitch that an inscrutable Providence ever set on four legs. She is a Yorkshire terrier by name, but I call her an insect. Nothing less. An insect. Certainly the word dog—a good honest word—if it is used with any force or fitness, of a Great Dane, say, or a bloodhound, never ought to be given to a midge like that. A midge, a mosquito, a gnat! In short, an insect."

"My husband is so funny," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey. "He will have his joke. He always calls our dogs insects. And it's all because he won't take

any pains with them, Miss Ingleside. A dog must be wooed quite as much as a human being. But my husband won't take any pains with them at all. He expects them all to love him at sight, and if they don't he gets cross with them."

"I don't expect it," said the Major, "and I don't want it. So far from wanting it, I spread Keating on myself to keep them away."

Both the ladies laughed gaily. "Isn't he funny?" Mrs. Bonham-Hervey asked. "He doesn't really mean it, though. He's as pleased as he can be when they have puppies."

Possibly the recollection of the important part played by puppies in his otherwise too frugal life affected the Major; in any case, his next remark was more friendly to the kennel.

"Yes," he said, "but what kind of puppies shall we be having soon with the country in the state that this is! Do you know, Miss Ingleside, that every day the strain of Japanese spaniels and schipperkes, and in fact all foreign dogs,—Borzois too,—is deteriorating?"

Ann had no notion.

"It is so," the Major barked at her. "And why? Because one of the infernal Governments under which we are so vilely oppressed prohibited the importation of dogs, except with restrictions that are unbearably vexatious and expensive. What does that mean?"

Ann again had no notion.

"It means too much inbreeding," said the Major. "Too much inbreeding." He fixed Ann with his dull glare, and his face was like a beetroot.

Ann, however, was lost. Her knowledge of dogs was of the shallowest. All that she knew was that she liked them and they liked her.

The Major perceived her difficulty, and made a gentlemanly and tactful effort to enlighten her. "If there are no new dogs coming into England," he said, "we must go on with the old ones, which

gradually, as they die off, become fewer. That means that the puppies have a tendency to become related, and too nearly related—members of a single family that gets smaller and smaller and smaller every year, and, as the result of this want of invigorating new blood, weaker and punier in character and frame each year. Now do you understand?"

Ann was still in a muddle, but her instinct told her it was time to affect apprehension, and this she successfully did.

"And so," the Major concluded, "you may imagine what it will be soon. The schipperke, who, at its best, is, I hold, an insect, will soon be such a midge that even my wife and Miss Anstruther here will admit it."

"Never!" the ladies laughingly exclaimed.
"Never!"

"Wait and see," said the Major.

"Well," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey, after the Major had filled his pipe and left them, "do you think you would like to join us? We should treat you just as one of ourselves; you would have your own room; and travelling expenses to the shows would of course be paid."

"There would be no salary?" Ann asked.

"Oh no, we do not want anyone that is in need of money. We offer a home and an absorbingly interesting hobby."

"I don't think it would be quite what I want," said Ann, realizing that frankness was the best policy.

"And why not, pray?" Mrs. Bonham-Hervey asked sharply.

"I don't think I should be happy here," said Ann. "I don't care for the country, and the dogs are not the kind I like best. I like larger dogs. And another thing is the want of salary. I have a very nice home as it is; I should not leave it unless I was earning something."

"Think again," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey. "You

HARVEST HOME

are making a mistake, I am sure. I tell you for your good. I like you. You'd have done well with us. My husband likes you—I could see it at once. He is rarely so gay with strangers. Didn't you notice," she said to her sister, " how Renton took to Miss Ingleside ? "

" Yes," said her sister, adding, " and it isn't as if you were always here. Think of the pleasant travelling about and the excitements of the shows. Very often they're opened by Royalty, you know; and the very best people compete. Our little Sigurd who's already won eighteen firsts,—darling Sigurd !"—she picked up a tiny spaniel and crushed it against her face—" when we were at Sevenoaks had the next cage to the Princess Schwanenstein's pet pony, and she and I became exceedingly friendly. A most delightful creature. I say again, as I have said before, that dog-fancying can bring one the most charming acquaintances in the world—apart altogether from profit. You remember, Amy dear, how nice the Duchess was when she wanted Iseult to be her little Kitchener's wee wifie ? Could anyone have been more affable or more considerate ? I assure you I have always looked forward to the shows with the keenest anticipation. I have so many friends there—you would only have to mention my name. Not only among the dog-fanciers—oh dear, no ! Among the cat-fanciers too. There's Miss Shunstone of Richmond, who has the Blue Persians. We have a compact always to have tea together on the first day. Miss Shunstone must make as much as three hundred a year out of her stud. No, Miss Ingleside, you make a great mistake not to join us. The introductions I could give you ! "

Ann, however, succeeded at last in convincing the ladies that by no she meant no ; and having assimilated this truth, their interest in her vanished.

" I'm very sorry," said Mrs. Bonham-Hervey, " but this afternoon unfortunately there's no one to drive you to the station. The Major and I have an en-

gagement, and our man is ill. The best train is at 5.4."

Ann met the Major a little way from the house.

" Well," he said, " are you coming to live with us ? "

Ann assured him that she was not.

He said he was sorry. " If I had known you were going," he said, " I would have driven you in. If you'll wait now, I'll put the pony in and overtake you. I have nothing to do "

" Oh yes, you have," said Ann. " You're going to take Mrs. Bonham-Hervey somewhere to call."

" Did she say that ? " said the Major, with a sigh.
" Lord, what a sex ! "

" Well, I must hurry on," said Ann, by no means anxious to hear the Major on his wife's foibles.

She therefore walked briskly back to Reigate, happy in her liberty, and happy also, like a good daughter, in the knowledge that she had a really interesting story to tell at dinner that night. Who would look ahead farther than that ?

DR. BLOSSOM*

"THE paper," said Dr. Blossom, his spectacles positively glinting with satisfaction, "has been carefully planned to meet a long-felt want. I have given immense thought to the matter. Look for yourself."

He handed me a copy.

"But first," he said, "I ought, perhaps, to tell you how it originated. You must know that before I retired and entered upon the present scheme, I had a very extensive practice in a great Flat centre of London. Where there are flats, as you may have observed, there are babies; for flats are largely the homes of those delightful people, on Sundays and in the evenings rarely seen apart, whom we refer to as young couples."

The old gentleman's spectacles again glistened with goodwill to man as he said these words.

"I suppose," he continued, "I have had during the past ten years an average of three births a week, almost all in a square mile of mansions, and many of them, a great proportion of them, first children."

His glasses glistened again.

"Ah," he went on, "it is the first children that count!"

He sighed.

"And this," he said, "brings me to my point. My point is that no matter what the ordinary person

* From *One Day and Another*.

says, whether it is the father or the father-in-law, the mother or the mother-in-law, the nurse or the doctor, or any one else: no matter who it is that speaks, or what the superlatives that are employed, *no baby is admired sufficiently to please the mother.* There, sir, you have the kernel of the whole matter."

I agreed.

"In my large practice," Dr. Blossom continued, "I naturally observed this difficulty—indeed, it was forced upon me daily, for with all my endeavours I also have constantly fallen short of what is expected of me; and when, the other day, I retired, I determined to spend my leisure in doing what I could to make those poor famished young mothers happier. I would, I said, invent some method of praising their babies adequately, or, if not adequately—for that, of course, is impossible—more acceptably."

He pointed to the paper in my hand, which as yet I had had no opportunity to open.

"Now, sir," he said, "you know the persistent fascination of print. You know that in spite of all the myriad newspapers, daily and weekly, that now assail our peace; in spite, too, of the fact that most of us are more or less intimately acquainted with some one who writes—so familiar with him, indeed, as to be contemptuous; none the less, no sooner does a thing, however trite, get into print, than we approach it with a certain reverence. Our national scepticism disappears. We worship."

I agreed.

"Very well. If, I said to myself, these poor young mothers are really to be made happy by the praise of their babies, those praises must be in print. They must be made public, distributed throughout the world. And that paper in your hand, *The Babies' Review*, was the result.

He took the paper again and opened it.

"I have chosen," he said, "as a model *The Athenaeum*, and by what I hope is a pardonable fancy, I have likened the birth of a new child to the

publication of a new book. Listen!" And he read as follows in a rich, sympathetic voice:—

"NEW GIRLS"

"*Gwendoline Frances Wilkinson*, who has just been published by Mrs. Wilkinson, of 23 Milton Mansions, Bedford Park, is one of the most perfect works we ever remember to have seen. The style is simple but wholly effective, the utmost finish being given even to trifles. The keynote of the work is sweetness and placidity, although a pleasant impression of something a little more positive is not lacking. The work is uniformly so healthy that a long life may confidently be hoped for it. England cannot have too much of this kind of boon."

"There," said Dr. Blossom, "that is the sort of thing. Here is another, under the heading, 'The Latest Boys':—

"From a young publishing firm named Lovebird, whose offices are at 14 Devonshire Mansions, Golder's Green, comes a new work in two volumes, entitled *The Lovebird Twins*. Both volumes are of a delicate pink with very soft edges, and both are extraordinarily interesting. Indeed, we find it impossible to express any preference, so alike are they in incident and charm. Perhaps Vol. II. is a little more vigorous than Vol. I.; but then, on the other hand, Vol. I. is more reposeful than Vol. II. By a pleasant fancy a different name has been given to each, Vol. I. being known as 'Cyril' and Vol. II. as 'Aubrey.' What could be prettier?"

"I go in also, like *The Athenaeum*, for variety, too. Here is another extract:—

"NEW PICTURES"

"We have just been favoured with the rare privilege of a private view of a perfect picture

entitled, 'George Robert Brownson,' the work of one who promises to be a gifted artist in this *genre*, Mrs Brownson, of 41 Rembrandt Buildings, Battersea Park. As a first work her 'George Robert Brownson' is admirable. Indeed, we can detect no fault. The colouring is very deep and rich, and the moulding exquisite. The picture positively clamours for notice.

"There!" said the proud editor. "When I tell you that portraits also are given, you will agree with me that mothers have little to complain of. The portraits, I admit, a little impair the literary illusion; but I have got over that difficulty by calling them frontispieces. Here, for example, are *The Lovebird Twins*, both volumes."

He held up the paper, in which were the photographs of two portions of what Sir Walter Scott described as that species of dough which we call a fine baby.

"You and me," said the doctor, "that picture may leave cold. But exercise your imagination, my dear sir; think of what it must mean to Mrs Lovebird to see it. I venture to say that there will be no happier woman in England to-morrow, except perhaps Mrs. Brownson and Mrs. Wilkinson. The husbands, too. Of course, it is the fashion for husbands to say sarcastic things about their babies and pretend to be bored by the whole business; but don't you believe it. If a well-read copy of this paper is not folded up in the pockets of Mr. Lovebird and Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Brownson by Saturday next, I will give fifty pounds to the Foundling Hospital. And think of the copies they will send away. I tell you, sir, this paper is a little gold-mine—a gold-mine of wealth and of happiness too."

I shouldn't be surprised.

THE STOLEN VERROCCHIO*

I

IT was just as I was putting away my book, quite late, that Miss Laura knocked at the door to say that Mr. Carstairs, the gentleman on the top floor, who had been ill for some days, had asked if I would be so good as to pay him a visit. This seemed to me odd, for beyond exchanging "good morning" now and then, we had never spoken; but it was not a request that I could disregard, and up I went.

The old gentleman was in bed, and as he lay there, gaunt and grey, with his hollow cheeks and bright eyes and pointed beard, he was like nothing in the world but Don Quixote. With a courteous movement he motioned me to a chair, and then thanked me for having compassion on a stranger's whim.

For a while after this there was silence, and I had an opportunity of noticing how bare was his room of all but necessities, although those seemed of the best. There were no pictures.

"I asked you to come," Mr. Carstairs began "because I had a bad night last night and I have had a bad day. This you may think but a poor reason," he continued, in his quiet, cultured voice smiling faintly, "and to you, who are well and strong it is inadequate. But to me, who am dying, it is

* From *London Lavender*.

justification for any eccentricity. I liked you directly I saw you, and it pains me to think that I have taken no steps to cultivate the acquaintance of yourself and your wife ; but I have long got out of the way of making overtures of friendship, and to occupy rooms in the same house, is not one of the best passports to a good understanding."

He lay back exhausted and began to cough. I looked among the bottles for a lenitive and found only an empty one. Asking him if there was another, I understood him to say it was in the cupboard by the window ; and to this I hurried. But no sooner was my hand on the handle than his face underwent a terrifying transformation, and he half-sprang from bed crying, " Not there ! Not there ! "

I came hurriedly from the door, and he quieted down and directed me to a cupboard on the other side. Now what Bluebeard's closet was this ? I wondered (with Mrs. Wiles). I was soon to know.

" I throw myself on your good nature," he resumed, " because I am *in extremis* and have no friend within call. It is extremely improbable that I shall get well from this attack. - You see, for one thing I am a good age, and for another I have very little to live for, and therefore am not likely to make a fight of it."

I murmured the usual things.

" No," he said, " there's very little in it. If I recover it is only for a brief while, with impaired strength. If I were younger and happier even that would be worth having ; but really one may as well die to-day as to-morrow. It's got to be."

This is a form of fatalism with which I am as fit to grapple as a seamstress with a cuttlefish, so I said nothing.

" Your kindness in coming up," he continued, " leads me to ask you to be kinder still and administer my effects. They are few enough. I want everything to go to the National Art Collections Fund. It sounds simple, but there is this complica-

tion, that the name by which I am known is not my real name; and my real name, although it is bound to come out, I want to be still suppressed in connection with myself. I die as John Carstairs."

My face, no doubt, indicated some perplexity, for he went on:

" You will understand only if I tell you the whole story; but first I must confess that I am one of the most notorious of living thieves—perhaps almost the most famous of all, in this country—who have never been found out. When I die the secret must of necessity be in part discovered. I look to you to help me so that my name and the theft are kept distinct."

I said nothing for a little while, but merely pondered on the accidents of life in general, and in particular that accident which had led me to 7 Primrose Terrace, Regent's Park, to a respectable-looking house kept by refined twins, in which I was to live beneath a dying brigand and be forced into the position of his executor.

" Does the prospect alarm you? " he asked.

" Well," I said, " to be frank, it is not what I should have asked for. But," I added hastily, " you may continue your instructions; that is, if you are really certain that there is no one but myself to help you. Have you no lawyer? "

" A lawyer witnessed my will quite recently," he said. " It is in order. You will perhaps go to him for its execution."

" And what about your next-door neighbour, Spanton? " I said.

He smiled grimly.

" Then Lacey, the best of men and the most ingenuous and helpful? "

" Yes," he said, " I thought of Lacey. But he has too much to do; and I was afraid he might be too clever. He is impulsive. This topic is so delicate that impulse might ruin it. So," he smiled humorously, " I had your name put in the document."

"Kismet," I replied ; but Heaven knows I wished myself downstairs with my door carefully locked. I neither wanted to hear his story nor to administer his ill-gotten estate. The whole thing was absurd. The chance of passing fellow-lodgers on the stairs and having the misfortune to appear benevolent and virtuous to their defective vision ought not to be permitted to lead to such embroilments as this. But I have ever been weak and acquiescent ; and when I looked at his melancholy, wasted features, what else could I do ? A dying Don Quixote—who would not be foolish for him ?

- When I agreed he gave a great sigh of relief—probably at once the most tragic and satisfactory sound I shall ever hear—and held out his long, bony hand.

" You can take it without fear," he said, smiling again ; " when I said I was a thief I did not say all. There is such a thing as stealing your own. But listen. The story briefly is this : I was a well-to-do business man, unmarried and not very sociable. That was twenty and more years ago. Then a serious crisis came in my life of which I need say nothing, and I decided suddenly to leave civilization completely and begin all over afresh where the conditions were simpler. There was no disgraceful element in the matter. An event occurred which led to complete disillusionment setting in ; I developed acute misanthropy and realised that England and I were incompatible. That is all. Many men—and perhaps many women—must have been through a similar experience ; but not all are as free as I was to act.

" I laid my plans very carefully. I converted a sufficient amount of stock into cash ; I made my will, leaving everything to the establishment of a certain kind of night refuge in London for the homeless, wherever they were most needed ; and then I disappeared. This was not difficult. I took a passage to America. Between Liverpool and Queens-

town I shaved off my long beard and moustache and changed my clothes. At Queenstown I left my stateroom, after depositing a last letter on the table, and went ashore among a crowd of other passengers. There I took train at once and was soon in London again, where I shipped for Australia and the South Seas. Meanwhile, that had happened on the steamer which I had foreseen. My stateroom was not opened until some hours after the vessel was on her way to America, and the contents of the letter there led people to assume that I had jumped overboard. I was therefore dead. A sufficient time having elapsed, the courts officially presumed my death, my estate was wound up, and I was a thing of the past. Any reasonably careful man can disappear still, in spite of Marconi and all the other modern obstacles, provided he has not committed a crime. And it was easier then."

"Were the night refuges built?" I asked.

"Oh yes," he said. "I have slept in one. A most curious experience.

"Arrived in Sydney I opened a banking account in my new name, made some investments, and passed on to the South Seas, where, for fifteen years, I lived a calm life, succeeding commercially, as I was bound to do, and happier perhaps than not, although happiness was never in my grasp, nor could it be. Then gradually the desire once more to be in London became very powerful; while an absolute mania seized me again to see pictures. Particularly one picture. That it would be safe, I felt sure, for I was much changed and had had few intimate friends at any time."

He paused, tired with his effort, and lay still.

"I must tell you," he continued, "that I had been not only a great lover of pictures wherever they were to be seen, but a collector too. At the time of my disappearance I had one of the best small private collections in the country. Such, however, had been my disgust with life that it included these pictures

too, and in my rage and haste to have broken with everything, I was ready to break with them as well, and my will gave instructions for all my pictures to be sold save one little jewel of paint, the very gem of the collection—a small Madonna which has been attributed to Verrocchio—and this I left to the National Gallery. It was this picture that I felt I must at any risk again see. I therefore sold my South Sea business, wound up my affairs, and returned to London, again a rich man, finding a lodging in this house. That was seven years ago.

"So far all is well. Now comes the criminal part of the story. No sooner did I see my little Verrocchio on its easel in the National Gallery—in the most honoured place—then I realized that I could not live without it. I had not known what a spell I was under or I would have stayed away. It had always been in my living-room in my old life, and I found that I belonged to it still. I used to go day after day to Trafalgar Square to worship it—nothing less. I became known to the attendants. After closing hours I would plot how to get possession of it again. I could not go to the Director and say who I was and insist on a return of the picture until I died in earnest. For one thing, he would not have believed me, and to make him believe me would have meant an endless and merciless raking up of the past: more than that, a return to my old identity, which was unbearable: men shaking hands with me, newspaper comment, and all the rest of it. Again, there was the risk that he might think me a dangerous lunatic and forbid me the Gallery. Think of that!

"I had therefore to consider how to get the picture secretly, and at last I managed it—at noon, of course, for that is the true time for successful theft, and by means of a big cloak on copying day. I had carefully noted the times when vigilance was relaxed, and waited my chance. It came; I removed the picture, passed quietly into the street, and found my way here unobserved."

He paused again. "You will, of course, remember the incident," he went on. "The world rang with it. 'Theft of the famous Verrocchio.' I had very little fear of being discovered and, naturally, no remorse; but I must admit to a little self-consciousness on my next visit to Trafalgar Square—for, of course, I was not so foolish as to discontinue my old habits. But I was cunning. I went to the Director and offered to give £5,000 as a reward for the detection of the thief—on the condition that the donor's name was not published. I was able also to discuss the theft with the officials quite calmly. My one regret was that the custodian of the room in which my little masterpiece was kept was discharged, but I have seen to it, always anonymously, that he has not lost financially.

"I now began to be almost happy. I had my picture and, the National Gallery being negligible, I was again able to look in at Christie's whenever I wished and mix again in this ocean we call London. I bought no more; I had the best; but I saw everything that was good, and became an amateur expert at the service of any of my dealer acquaintances.

"My one disappointment was that being so exceptional a picture thief I was not, and am not, able to enter into the feelings of the more typical kind. For naturally the one thing above all others that I want to know is who took the Louvre Leonardo, and why, and where it is. The motive could not have been identical with mine, but it might be akin. But this I shall never know, because I am going to die."

"Not yet," I said, "not yet."

"Yes," he replied. "And I must waste no more time. I am very weak. What I want you to do is to get this picture back into the possession of the National Gallery without any one suspecting my connection with it. That is all. The ordinary execution of my will you and the lawyer can manage without the faintest difficulty, and I have left you plenty for such expense and trouble as you are put

to. But the restitution of this picture I count on you to make alone. You will do it?"

I shook his hand. "I will do everything possible to preserve secrecy," I said.

"There is no hurry," he replied. "Take your time. Keep it in your room in a parcel until you are ready. Only the suspected are suspected in this world, and you and I are equally remote from their thoughts."

He lay still again.

"But where," I asked, after a while, "is the picture?"

"In there," he said, pointing to the door to which I had wrongly gone for the cough mixture. "Go in. No one has seen it here but myself."

I opened the door and found myself in a little room lighted by one window. Opposite this on the wall was a curtain.

"Turn on the light," he said, "and draw back the curtain."

I did so, and beheld one of the most exquisite paintings I ever saw—the head of a girl, sweet, wistful, understanding, and gay. Not quite a Madonna; no mother; but the very personification of youthful joy, sympathy, and loveliness. I knew too little of painting to express an opinion as to the authenticity, and Verrocchio, I am told, although he was the master of Leonardo and Perugino and Lorenzo di Credi, has left almost nothing authentically from his own brush; but there is a candour and charm in the treatment, and transparency in the colours, which are like nothing that I know except the National Gallery picture attributed to this master's school.

"Bring it to me, please," said Carstairs from his bed, and I carried it in and held it for him.

"No one has ever seen it but myself—and now you—since it left the Gallery four years ago," he said.

"Mrs. Wiles has done her best to get into that room, but in vain. I suppose every one who steals a picture

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"No one has ever seen it but myself—and now you—since it left the Gallery four years ago," he said. "Mrs. Wiles has done her best to get into that room, but in vain. I suppose every one who steals a picture

or becomes the owner of a stolen picture has similar difficulties. Perhaps the safer way would be to have another canvas or panel over the stolen one, in the same frame, to slide aside when one is alone ; but that would mean taking a workman more or less into one's confidence, and no wise thief does that.

"Put it back, put it back," he cried suddenly, as he fell on his pillow unconscious.

I did so at once, put the key of the cupboard door in my pocket, and telephoned for the doctor.

II

AFTER visiting Naomi to tell her of the state of things upstairs, I returned to Mr. Carstairs' room and awaited the doctor. The sick man did not recover consciousness. It was then necessary to inform the Misses Packer and telephone to the undertaker, and this I agreed to do. Before, however, I descended to the basement with my grim message, I secured some paper and string, made a parcel of the little Verrocchio, and placed it on a shelf in my room. Having agreed to carry out this peculiar and delicate commission, I meant to do it thoroughly.

Miss Laura and Miss Emma took the demise of Mr. Carstairs as a personal affront. I gathered that he had never been a favourite with them, although his money was good and he gave no trouble ; but to die under their roof they held to be an action not only ungentlemanly, but dishonest.

"Brings such a bad name on a house to have any one die in it," said Miss Laura. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if Mr. Spanton were to leave. Of course with you, sir, it's different, you not being acquainted with the deceased, and two floors away, whereas Mr. Spanton's so close."

Having had another look at the mysterious cupboard, I thought it best to obtain the services of a lawyer before proceeding further ; and together we

looked for the will. It was easily found, and on reading it I discovered that the old fellow had truly inserted my name as his executor with a firm hand some days before he asked me: not a bad divination of my besetting complaisance! I discovered also something that caused the Misses Packer not only to change their tone with regard to the deceased but sent them cheerfully to his funeral in new and becoming mourning, for he left them each fifty pounds in recognition of their unremitting kindness, and asked to be allowed to pay for the new papering and whitewashing of his rooms. To Mrs. Wiles he left ten pounds, and to his executor, "to compensate him for any unusual worry, vexation, and expense to which he may be put," five hundred pounds—an amount which seemed to perplex the lawyer not a little. "You're very lucky, my dear sir," he said. "Why, there's nothing to do!" If the Law only knew!

We buried John Carstairs at Kensal Green, and I ordered the stonemason to place on his tombstone the words, from the Song of Solomon, "*O thou fairest among women,*" and to this hour the honest fellow thinks I am mad.

These things being accomplished, I was free to bend my mind to the question of the restitution of the little Verrocchio; and this I had to work out absolutely alone. I could not even tell Naomi, even under that elastic understanding which is held to entitle married people to share secrets entrusted to either, for although I am no believer in the old saying that no woman can keep a secret, or, rather, do not believe that a woman is less of an oyster in these matters than a man, yet I did not wish to burden her with so good a forbidden mystery. I do not say she would have been embarrassed to retain it; but even the most cautious of us have a way now and then of dressing up a friend's confidence vaguely, with several removes, and so forth, which, though safe enough in some companies, might give every-

thing away to a clever listener who was acquainted with one's circle. Anyway I did not tell her.

The only real temptation which I had to break the dead man's injunction, was to tell Lacey. Lacey would not only have been useful, but he would have so enjoyed it. I did not even dare to skirt the subject with him, to get the benefit of his improvisations. Furley, too, what would he not have given to be in a position to "film" me (as he calls it) with the famous picture under my arm on the errand of restitution!

I began—as I guess most criminals do, and I was a kind of inverted criminal with all a criminal's desire for secrecy—by inventing elaborate schemes, the cleverest things you ever heard of. But I gave them all up in favour of the most obvious commonplace simplicity. Having decided what to do, I waited three months and then did it. The delay was due to the fear that if I acted at once, two and two might easily be put together, since Carstairs had left all his money—no inconsiderable sum—to the National Art Collections Fund, and a comparison of dates might lead to investigation, and an interview with the Misses Packer or Mrs. Wiles might educe the fact of the locked cupboard, and then perhaps there would be a cross-examination of myself, from which the truth would probably emerge. At least, so I feared.

I therefore allowed the parcel to remain among my papers—every night waking up convinced the house was on fire, and never leaving it without expecting to find only ashes on my return—and at the end of three months I chose a moment when every one was out, and in broad day conveyed the parcel to the cloak-room of that very centre of bustle and curiosity, the Piccadilly Circus Tube station, where, in the thick of passengers and chorus girls, I deposited it and paid my twopence. The boy gave me my ticket without lifting his eyes, and I again merged with the crowd. I had already printed on a piece

of plain paper an intimation that if the Director of the National Gallery would send for the parcel concerned, he would not regret the deed, and this I enclosed with the ticket in an envelope, and dropped it into the post.

I could not send the picture direct, because that would have meant either an intermediary or myself carrying it. I could not send the note by express, because that would have meant a visit to the post office at a given registered time. Hence the pillar box, which, though safe, gave me one further anxiety — fear lest the Piccadilly Circus station should also be consumed by fire in the night; but this very unlikely contingency did not keep me awake, for, as Trist says, "The art of life is to take all reasonable precautions and then throw the responsibility on the shoulders of Fate."

The next day nothing happened, but *The Times* of the morning after had the whole glorious story. The lines

"RECOVERY OF A LOST MASTERPIECE THE STOLEN VERROCCHIO"

caught my eye at once, and I settled down to the perusal of what still is to me the most amusing piece of literature in the language.

"Listen," I said to Naomi, "here's something interesting," and I read as follows:—

"It will be remembered that some four years ago the world was startled by the news that the portrait of an unknown woman, attributed to Verrocchio, the master of Leonardo da Vinci, had disappeared from the National Gallery. The theft was contrived in full daylight, probably by a clever gang whose plans had long been maturing, and although Scotland Yard exerted every effort, no trace of the miscreant was found. Yesterday the Director received, by the first post, a letter in a disguised hand enclosing a ticket for the cloak-room at Piccadilly Circus

HARVEST HOME

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"Sure to be," I said.

"Then let's look in this morning, shall we?"

I was only too willing, and together we stood before the little Verrocchio in its new position, screwed to the wall, with a custodian on either side. Never have I been so glad to see any picture in its right place.

"Why do you sigh like that?" Naomi asked.

"It's so satisfying," I said, but I did not mean quite what she thought.

And so ended not only my first, and I hope last, participation in the higher crime, but also my first, and I hope last, deception of Naomi.

LETTERS FROM AUNT CHARLOTTE*

MISS FAIR TO EDITH GRAHAM.

THE LAURELS,
GRANGE-OVER-SANDS.

MY DEAR EDITH.—What you tell me of your new home and occupations fills me with misgivings. I do not at all like your employer's interest in lecturers who know more than the Bible, especially Americans. Life has difficulties enough as it is without adding to them. Even here in a little place like Grange we have great perplexities, and to add to everything else the best butcher in the town has just retired and sold his business to a firm with hundreds of branches who cannot give the individual attention that Mr. Radbone used to. We shall all feel it, but no one more than my poor Griselda, because her little pieces of raw meat every morning (you know that Blue Persians must have raw meat if they are to keep in good health, and even then they are delicate and lose their hair and are often ill through swallowing it) were so carefully looked out for her by Mrs. Radbone herself, a very nice woman, who

* From *Lisieux's Letters*.

will now I feel sure find the time hang very heavily on her hands. She talks of a small farm, and I hope she will keep her husband up to it, but his ambition seems to be to travel a little, and that I know will not suit her at all, she being very corpulent and shy.

I hope you will be very careful to go to church regularly in spite of Mrs. Pink. I understand there is a large church quite near Kensington Square, but Mr. Lark, who used to live in Highbury, has rather distressed me by saying that Kensington is quite a stronghold of Roman Catholics. I don't hold with giving advice, but you must feel your way very warily, my dear child, especially as you are I know fond of music, and these people are so cunning that they find out one's weaknesses at once. I gave up painting in water colours in 1881 entirely owing to the interest which a young Roman Catholic lady professed to take in my progress in that accomplishment, but which was probably something much more serious, for they are always hoping to make converts, or perverts as I prefer to call them, to the Pope. Those of us who have any artistic sense are so much more precariously placed than the others.

I must stop now or I shall miss the post.

Your loving,

AUNT CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—I am sending you a few eggs which I have no doubt your employer, who seems for all her mistaken laxity to be a humane woman, will allow you to ask the cook to boil. I think three and a quarter minutes the exact time, but servants are very careless and very often the water is not boiling when the egg is dropped in (sometimes so carelessly that it breaks and all its goodness escapes) or if it is, the egg puts it off. Mr. Lark tells me that there are no really fresh eggs in London, whatever the shopkeepers may say. Life can be very hard.

MISS FASE TO EDITH GRAHAM.

THE LAUPELS,
GRANGE-OVER-SANDS.

MY DEAR EDITH,

I have wanted to write to you for some time on a very delicate subject, but have not been able to bring myself to begin. But now I feel I must delay no longer. I refer to the Heart. You are, dear, living in a great city full of young men, and sooner or later you will become an object of their admiration. Although I do not hold with giving advice, yet I hope you will be very careful. I do not say that you should be so careful that you should never marry at all. One can make grave mistakes in that way, very great mistakes. But you must search your heart very narrowly before you say Yes to any one. The natural tendency of a nicely brought-up girl is always to say No, but of course, as she learns afterwards, when alas! it is too late, there are times when she really meant the opposite. My dear child, do not make this mistake. I have known lives made permanently sad through it.

It is said that marriages are made in heaven, but it is difficult to believe it of some. The Bank Manager here, such a nice man, a Mr. Crask, has the utmost unhappiness in his home life. I am sure there could not be a more gentlemanly official than he is, and it is a pleasure to ask for one's pass book, but no sooner does he get upstairs than his troubles begin. I am told that Mrs. Crask cannot forgive him for being only a clerk. She married him under the impression that he was a banker, and such is her nature that she persecutes him day and night for her mistake. I am told that he met her at Blackpool, where her mother kept a boarding-house; and though of course there is nothing in your case that corresponds to hers, I thought you ought to know about it.

On the other hand the senior curate here is one of

the most happily married men you could conceive of, with a large family and a pony. His wife was the daughter of a rich farmer in Devonshire, and they have the best cheese I ever tasted. She has a little private income and a perfectly placid disposition. But I wish she would buy better tea, for the Dorcas meetings at her house are only half as pleasant as they should be. The taste for China tea is not common, most people seeming to prefer the rough Indian or Ceylon. At the last Dorcas meeting we began to read aloud Sir Frederick Treves' travel book, *The Other Side of the Lantern*—such a charming work. It would, I am sure, do your Mrs. Pink good.

I must now stop or I shall miss the post.

Your loving,
AUNT CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—You will not, I am sure, misunderstand that remark about marriages being made in Heaven. Of course I believe that all things are made in Heaven, but some are for our chastisement and are too mysterious for us to comprehend, like Mrs. Crask's temper. Poor Mr. Crask once called on me, in the morning, on a question connected with my signature, and his manners were most refined and gentle. He bowed to me over a glass of sherry in a way that almost put me out of countenance.

MISS FASE TO EDITH GRAHAM.

THE LAURELS,
GRANGE-OVER-SANDS.

MY DEAR EDITH,

I write to you to know if you will be so good as to work some little thing for our church bazaar, where I have a stall with two other ladies, Miss Cole, whom I daresay you will remember as my neighbour, at The Laburnams, on the other side to Miss Passmore,

and a very pleasant neighbour too, except for a little dog that will bark in the night and ought to be treated with more severity, and Mrs. Bamside-Block, the widow of the late vicar, who still lives on here to be near her husband's grave, which is a very handsome one, in Aberdeen granite, with an inscription from her own pen that some of the parishioners think rather too extreme in its praise, but which only a very cultivated and well-read woman could have written. The Blocks are indeed a very old and gifted family, one of the oldest in England I believe; but of course that does not really matter because Mrs. Bamside-Block would have taken the name from her husband. She was herself I believe a Miss Birdie, but I know very little about her except that her father invented something of world-wide fame but I forget what it was—either a patent wire-mattress, I think, or perhaps it was a new method of filing bills. Anyhow his daughter is a clever woman and quite the intellectual leader here among our regular residents. She goes to the Oxford Summer meeting of the University Extension movement every summer, and Mr. Churton Collins himself once stayed in her house here and was most entertaining, she told me afterwards, on the subject of the Merstham tunnel murder and coincidences in general, keeping them up till nearly midnight.

Of course, my dear, I know you are very busy most of the day, but I thought you might have a little time to yourself after lunch and in the evening, and I know it would be a pleasure to you to work something for our church. The vicar is such a dear hardworking man, with a constant thorn in his side in the shape of a thriftless son who has never done anything but waste his time and his father's money since he left Oxford, and we want little simple useful things such as egg coseys, although I doubt if there is any way of keeping an egg hot except in hot water, and that of course makes it hard even although you crack the top or kettle holders, or doyleys, or table centres, or night

dress bags, or toilets, or watch pockets. But of course dear if you are too busy you must not trouble at all.

I must now stop if I am to catch the post.

Your loving,
AUNT CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—From what you have told me of Mrs. Pink I fear it is useless to ask her for any help except perhaps a few old things for the Rummage Sale. We should be glad of anything we could get, and it is so much pleasanter of course to know something of the people who wore the clothes before they were left off. I am sure we could feel quite safe with anything of Mrs. Pink's.

MISS FASE TO EDITH GRAHAM.

THE LAURELS,
GRANGE-OVER-SANDS.

MY DEAR EDITH,

I am so glad to hear of your engagement. Of course it would have been very nice if it had been Sir Herbert Royce instead of Mr. Harberton, because then you would have been Lady Royce, and a title always seems to me a distinguished thing even in these times when so many are given to quite vulgar people. There is a knight who takes a house here every summer, and I can assure you that the friends who come to see him for week-ends are most odious, and the livery his groom wears is not nearly so neat as our doctor's. He was, I believe, a mayor, or a brewer, or perhaps both, and once as he drove past this house he threw his cigar end at Griselda. But I am very glad about your marriage, because although doubtless there must always be single women in England, with the number of women so much in advance of men, yet I have always prayed that you would not be one of them, because I know how good and happy a wife you will be.

I am sure Mr. Harberton is a very fortunate man,

much more fortunate than he deserves, I think, considering how long he has known you and how he might have asked you any time these past five years and you not too young even then. But, as Mr. Willocks, the churchwarden, who is a very wise and often witty man, says, we have to wait the Almighty's appointed hour and not until His clock strikes can we do anything, and so I suppose it is all right. All the same I blame Mr. Harberton for shilly-shallying and not knowing his mind, with all your happiness at stake.

Poor Mr. Willocks, he has had much trouble lately, his only son having been injured severely at a football match at school. I can't think how they can allow football to be played. Cricket I can understand, although I read in a paper the other day that a butcher in Australia—or was it New Zealand?—had been so severely stunned by a cricket ball hitting him on the temple that he had lost his memory and had no recollection whatever of who or what he was. Arthur Willocks was not so badly hurt as that, but he is likely to be in bed for at least two weeks, and as Mrs. Willocks has been a sufferer from insomnia for years it is very sad. She has tried everything without success, but a gentleman who lectured here last week on Hygiene for the Home, a most interesting lecture, and who stayed at the Willocks', recommended her to try a hammock instead of a bed, and they are having one put up now, and that may work wonders. I am sure I hope it will, if only for poor Mr. Willocks' sake.

Now that it is all settled I can tell you, dear, a secret. You may have wondered why I have never asked you to stay with me. It was not I can assure you because I did not want you, for I have wanted to see you exceedingly, as how could I help wanting to see my own dear sister's only daughter, but because of young Bernard Falkiner, the vicar's son, who will not do any work, but leads an idle life here and is a hopeless ne'er-do-well, I fear, and such a grief

to his poor parents. I could not bring myself to ask you here while he was about, for he is so very handsome and charming, with all his wild and dreadful ways, that I had a premonition you would be attracted by him, and that would be so disastrous. That was the only reason, my dear. Now that you are an engaged woman I do so hope you will come soon. There is not much excitement to offer you, but the air is very good, and the view of the Bay is very pretty from my sitting-room, and I have such a number of flowers in the garden, sharing a gardener as I do with Miss Pasemore and Miss Cole, two days a week each and quite cheap. I get books regularly from the railway library, so that you would have plenty to read, and there is often an interesting lecture at the Hall, and some very nice people live here, among them Mr. Greatorex, who having been to Italy knows all about pictures and has a most interesting collection of photographs of foreign places which he is always so pleased and ready to show. Poor man, we have all seen them so often that when a stranger comes his happiness knows no bounds. So do come, dear, as soon as you can manage it, for just as long as you like, only you must let me have good notice.

I want to give you a very nice present. We have such an excellent shop here, kept by a most enterprising and worthy man, a Mr. Mister. It is a very awkward name, isn't it? It always seems so absurd to say "Mr." twice. I have told him about your engagement and he is most interested and is going to get a selection of anything you like for me to choose from. So will you please say which of the following articles you most fancy?—

Butter dish.

Egg stand.

Cruet.

Salt cellars and knife and fork rests.

Salad bowl with fork and spoon.

Biscuit box.

I should like to give you something you were

constantly using, although I hope you won't call it by my name, as some young people here do with their wedding presents. It is very disconcerting to be asked to pass Aunt Emily instead of the mustard, or to be offered Uncle James and to find it holds biscuits. Mr. Mister very strongly recommends a new kind of coal-scuttle, which he calls a perdoneum, but I am sure Mr. Hyrberton has coal-scuttles enough. It is one of the drawbacks of marrying a man firmly established in his own house that people have such difficulty in choosing presents.

I must stop now or I shall miss the post.

Your affectionate,
AUNT CHARLOTTE.

P.S.—I have just remembered that the butcher who lost his memory was living in Tasmania. I hope he has got it back now, poor man; although if were a butcher I am sure I should like to forget it. Of course I don't say for certain you would have liked Bernard Falkiner, but I had the most serious presentiment and it is a dark fascinating kind of handsomeness.

THE GAMBLERS*

ON the way back Sir Gaston told us of an incident many years ago, when he did occasionally put something on a horse—not as a habit, but if he heard anything.

He had been staying, he said, with two friends for a fortnight in Ireland, fishing at a man named Regan's. One friend was Glenister, a curious obstinate fellow, now in India; the other was Horace Bradley, the K.C. The day before their last they were driving over to Rushtown to see the races, and on the way Captain O'Driscoll overtook them in his American buggy. I reconstruct Sir Gaston's story.

"' Going to the races ? ' O'Driscoll asked, as he slowed down for a moment. ' So'm I. See you there.' He clicked on, and then, stopping again, turned round to call out—' Don't forget Blackadder for the College Stakes. Dead cert. Put your shirts on, and was again off.

"' All very well,' said Glenister thoughtfully, ' but where are our shirts ? Speaking personally, my shirt is a return ticket to London and about eighteen shillings, which I shall need.'

"' Yes,' said Bradley. ' And I'm no better off, confound it ! '

"' You forget,' said I, ' that I have a five-pound note in my pocket intended as our joint tip to old

* From *London Lavender*.

Rice.' (Rice was Regan's butler). 'Lucky we decided to put it aside.'

"'Yes,' said Glenister, 'but that's the butler's.'

"'Not till to-morrow,' said I.

"'No,' said Bradley, 'not till to-morrow.'

"'But hang it all,' said Glenister, who was a precisian and adored his conscience, 'where are we if we put it on this horse and the beggar loses? I know these dead certs. It won't be Rice's to-morrow, then, will it? To my mind, it's his now, and we ought to respect his ownership. It was to make sure of his having it that we gave it to the Goat to keep.'

"I was the Goat. How funny to think of it now! I haven't been called the Goat for hundreds of years."

"O father," said Ann, "may I call you the Goat?"

"Certainly not," said the Knight. "I admitted that Glenister was logical," he continued, "'But all the same,' I said. 'here's a straight tip, and it's a sin not to use it. One doesn't often get them, and to start a whole menagerie of sophistries in return is the kind of ingratitude that Providence doesn't soon forgive."

"'Of course,' said Bradley. 'The Goat's right. And, after all, there's no sense in being so infernally conscientious. A gamble's a gamble, and old Rice would be almost as pleased to hear that we had put his fiver on a horse as to have it shoved into his hand.'

"Glenister laughed. 'I say no more,' he said. 'You do what you like with the fiver. Personally, I shall have ten shillings on Blackadder to win, although why on earth we all swallow that soldier man's advice so unquestionably I shall never understand.'

"'If the Goat will lend me two pounds,' said Bradley, 'I will back Blackadder for a pound each way.'

"'The Goat won't,' said I. 'All that the Goat proposes to do is to put the butler's fiver on to win.'

" This, later, I did, having found a bookmaker who was giving 10 to 1 ; and, true to Captain O'Driscoll's word, Blackadder romped in an easy winner.

" I collected the eleven rustling five-pound notes and stowed them carefully away inside my coat, and in the later afternoon we drove back. Naturally we had a good deal to say about the racing, our fortunate meeting with O'Driscoll, and so forth. And then suddenly Glenister remarked, ' I wonder what the old boy will do with it ? Set up as a small tobacconist in Dublin, do you think ? '

" ' What old boy ? ' I asked.

" ' Why, Rice, of course.'

" ' You can't set up as a small tobacconist on five pounds,' said Bradley. ' At least, if you did, you'd be so small a tobacconist that your customer would want a microscope.'

" ' Don't be an idiot,' said Glenister. ' He'll have fifty-five pounds, won't he ? '

" Bradley and I were silent. This was a proposition that needed thought.

" I don't see why he should have more than the fiver,' I said at last. ' It was all we were going to give him, wasn't it ? You will admit that ? '

" ' Certainly,' said Glenister. ' It was his fiver, and you were keeping it for him, weren't you ? You won't deny that ? '

" ' In a way I was,' I said.

" ' O law ! ' groaned Bradley. ' What a hair-splitter ! '

" ' Very well, then,' said Glenister. ' You had Rice's five pounds and you gambled with it—in itself a jolly unprincipled thing to do, as it wasn't yours : poor devils are doing time all over the place for much less ; and now, when your flutter turns up trumps, you deny him—who might have been your victim—the benefit ! I call it downright mean—squalid, in fact.'

" ' You make it sound rotten,' I said ' but there's

HARVEST HOME

a fallacy somewhere. To begin with, as I said before, it isn't the butler's own money till to-morrow. He hadn't earned it till the end of our visit. If it wasn't his it is ours, and we could do as we liked with it. We did and the result is we have now enough to divide up into sixteen pounds, thirteen shillings, and fourpence each, which I shall be pleased to give you directly we get back, while Rice has his fiver intact.'

"' Not for me,' said Glenister. ' I won five pounds with my own ten bob, and that's all I make out of Blackadder.' I can't take your sixteen pounds odd, because it isn't mine. I may snore, as you agree to allege, but I'm not a thief.'

"' O law ! ' Bradley groaned again. ' My dear Glenister, you're talking like a Herbert Spencer sort of ass. All it means is that the Goat and I will have to take twenty-five pounds each ? '

"' No,' said Glenister, ' you can't do that ; because a third, at any rate, of the original fiver was mine, or, as I hold, the butler's, and he must have what that share made. You and the Goat can take the sixteen pounds odd each, but the butler must have my third and the original fiver besides. But I don't envy you your explanation to him.'

"' No,' I said after a while, ' either the butler must have all or none. I can see that.'

"' Dash the whole stupid business ! ' exclaimed Bradley. ' Let him have it all. We'll be generous.'

"' It belongs to him,' said Glenister. ' There's no generosity in the matter. There's nothing but justice or injustice.'

"' Very well,' Bradley snapped out. ' I'm tired of it. Next time I go to a race-meeting I'll take care it's not with a blooming Socrates.'

"' Then that's settled,' I said as cheerfully as I could. ' Rice has the lot.'

"' The lot,' said Glenister. ' I'll admit it's enough, but there's no other course.'

"' We rode the rest of the way in disgust and silence, and then"—here Sir Gaston began to laugh—"and

then the rummest thing happened. Regan's groom met us at the stable-yard and took the mare's head. He seemed to be unusually excited, and I wondered if he had learned that he, too, had backed a winner.

"I'm afraid you'll find the house a bit upset," he said to Glenister, "but the fact is, there's been a little trouble while you were away. The butler's bolted. It seems he's been dishonest for a long time, and to-day he thought the game was up and ran."

"We looked at each other and then a threefold sigh rent the air.

"Bradley suddenly began to roll with laughter.

"Glenister for a while did not speak. Then, 'I'll trouble you,' he said to me, 'for sixteen pounds, thirteen shillings, and fourpence, and the third of a five-pound note.'"

I wondered what were Sir Gaston's feelings as to his prospective son-in-law's gambling propensities, and later, on the way back, he enlightened me.

"It's an odd business, this," he said, "to you and me, for I take it that you, like myself, were brought up in a middle-class way by quiet and God-fearing parents. Here we are with a lot of young people doing a thing which my father would have heartily disapproved of, and which we should have the greatest difficulty in defending if we were accused of it in public by a professional religious man or enthusiastic philanthropist. You, of course, would have a comparatively easy time. You would come out merely as a retired gentleman from abroad who was interested in social customs. But I—I am a Government servant and the father of a young girl who is going to marry this racing habitué. What sort of a case should I have?"

"Well, if it comes to that," I said, "what sort of case does one ever have while the prosecution is talking? Personally, I always agree with my own censors, although dimly I am conscious that there is another side to the case—mine—if only it could be made articulate. All the same, I, too, have been

considering the question of young Heathcote. When are they going to marry?"

"I haven't a notion," said Sir Gaston. "All I know is that it will be later rather than sooner. My daughter is out for what she calls a good time—by which, of course, she means an irresponsible one. She has enough instinct and good feeling to realise that once she is married irresponsibility will cease. She has not enough emotional independence to be impatient for marriage. Heathcote seems to me precisely similar in temperament. Hence I look upon them as two of the most enviable creatures living. I sit and watch them at their superficial jokes and superficial wranglings, and most of all at their frivolous plan-makings for the morrow, and consider them the heirs of the ages in the happiest sense. The best of it is that both are really exceedingly sensible, and if only needs a shock—such as standing at the altar steps in their best clothes, with a really serious person in a surplice saying really serious things—to steady them for life. Ann, who has already shown her capacity for work and routine, having learned typing thoroughly in an office, will instantly become a wife and Heathcote instantly a husband. He will adopt regular habits, come home to lunch, and very likely keep accounts. The very harmless form of wild oats that they are sowing now I don't fear in the least. I should be much more alarmed if they were always embracing and whenever they walked out he took her arm and they were both hastening the wedding: then I should fear that the flame might die down too quickly, and trouble follow. But these two—they're all right. They have a public contempt for each other which contains the best promise."

I dare say Sir Gaston is right. He seems to be shrewd. But his remarks caused me to press Naomi's hand under the rug with more than usual fondness.

Yet Ann was not really selfish, even if she shared with her father a perversity which made her willing

to appear so ; for when once we found ourselves in a block, and were conscious of the crying of a small child, with its mother, father, and two other children in a donkey barrow, it was Ann who saved the situation. Never have I heard such pitiful wailing. The mother was tired and cross, and in no mood to be patient with it ; the father was cross too, and the other children began to whimper in sympathy. Before anyone knew what she was about, Ann had jumped out of the car, taken the child from its mother, and was giving it one of Dollie's expensive chocolate creams and saying pretty crooning things to it. The mother and other children had the rest of the box, and in a short time all were happy again.

" But although it amuses me to watch them," Sir Gaston continued, " I can't find much real satisfaction in it. My other daughter, Allison, is completely lost to me, except for letters, for her husband has taken her to Ceylon. And now Ann is going ; and deprived of any society of the younger generation, which, however, it may irritate us at times, helps us to keep young and in touch with the day (I can say 'topping' with the best of them, although 'wow-wow' is beyond me), I have no alternative but to become old. And old age has no kind of attractiveness. I have no patience with people who profess to enjoy growing old. They merely remind one of those lines of the American poet :—

" Unto each man comes a day when his favourite sins
forsake him,
And he complacently thinks he has forsaken his sins."

Speaking for myself, who am nearing sixty, I would say that the only piece of satisfaction that the process of ageing has brought to me is the knowledge that the word 'unshrinkable' has no real basis in fact. But I do not call myself really old yet. Not till a young woman offers me her seat in a railway compartment will that tragedy really be mine. At that moment I shall know that all is up."

STUDIES IN CONSOLATION*

I

M R. and Mrs. Linsey-Martell lived a life of disagreement.

Mr. Linsey-Martell was a novelist in a modest but capable way.

Mrs. Linsey-Martell did not dislike her husband, and was annoyed when he was away, but she took no interest in his work, never read his novels, and rarely mentioned him to her friends except in disparagement, referring to him not exactly as a brute but an incubus.

Mr. Linsey-Martell died.

Mrs. Linsey-Martell was plunged in dismay ; yet the dressmaker's visit was not without excitement, and her mind dwelt more on the future than the past.

The next day she was astonished by the arrival of two journalists within a few minutes of each other, asking for details concerning Mr. Linsey-Martell's career, which she supplied in a colourless narrative.

During the morning three similar applications were made, and as she replied to them she began to be conscious of a new feeling concerning Mrs. Linsey-Martell in which something like pride had a part. Emotion once interrupted her narrative.

As Mrs. Linsey-Martell read the notices in the papers the next day, she realised that it was an

* From *One Day and Another*.

interesting thing to be the widow of a great writer. Her heart beat.

From an article in a weekly paper, Mrs. Linsey-Martell learned a number of adjectives to apply to her husband's works.

* * * * *

Mrs. Linsey-Martell had all Mr. Linsey-Martell's books bound in morocco, richly tooled, and a little bookcase made specially for them.

* * * * *

Mrs. Linsey-Martell thinks nothing of any other author.

II

As the body of William Smith was leaving the cemetery-chapel on its way to the grave, an elderly gentleman of aristocratic mien alighted from an electric brougham, and after a word with an official, joined the little band of mourners.

William Smith was moving more slowly than he ever had done in life, for he had been a commercial traveller noted for his briskness until double pneumonia set in.

Mrs. Smith had seen her husband infrequently, and then only for brief week-ends, but she respected him deeply, was grateful for the position to which he had raised her, and, weeping steadily now at the graveside, had accepted grief as her destiny.

The ceremony over, the stranger approached Mrs. Smith in an attitude of sympathetic courtesy, and offered her his arm to the gate. He told her how highly he had always valued her husband, how completely they had understood each other, and how different everything had been since they parted.

The widow listened with respect and satisfaction, in no way embarrassed by her ignorance of the gentleman's name, for her husband naturally had had many friends unknown to herself, although this

HARVEST HOME

one certainly seemed to be, both in attire and in address, far removed above her idea of the majority of them, several of whom were indeed present.

"If there is anything I can do, Mrs. Smith," said the stranger, as he shook her hand at the gates, "you must write to me. You will see that I have moved to another town house," and handing her his card, he lifted his hat with a gesture of reverent courtesy, stepped into his brougham, and was driven away.

The widow looked at the card, and reeled. It was that of the Earl of Borrodaile.

One by one, as the high tea progressed, anecdotes of the Earl of Borrodaile came to the memory of this guest and that—his wealth, his career, his wild oats, his famous or infamous ancestry, but most of all, recurring and recurring, his perfect manners, the unmistakable assifiability of your true nobleman, as compared with the supercilious condescension of the spurious political or newspaper breed, with a word for the modesty (or craftiness) of the deceased in keeping so distinguished a friendship a secret from his older pals.

The next day one of the guests sent the widow not only a cabinet photograph of the earl but also his caricature, by no means unkindly done, from *Vanity Fair*. These pictures, one in the parlour framed in gilt, and one in Mrs Smith's bedroom in plush, may now be seen, with the widow often before them, pointing them out to her friends and callers, with suitable memories not only of the peer himself but of his intimacy with her husband: except for a shining drop of pride perfectly the mistress of herself, serene in anecdote. For by the infinite goodness of God she has never learned that the Earl of Borrodaile was under the impression that he was consoling the widow of William Smith, his old pensioned valet, whose funeral had been in progress only a few yards distant at the same time.

THE LIFE SPHERICAL*

IT was a beautiful September day, and they floated softly over green Surrey.

"And this is England!" said the foreigner. "I am indeed glad to be here at last, and to come in such a way."

"You could not," the other replied, "have chosen a more novel or entertaining means of seeing the country for the first time."

They leaned over the edge of the basket and looked down. The earth was spread out like a map: they could see the shape of every meadow, penetrate every chimney.

"How beautiful," said the foreigner. "How orderly and precise. No wonder you conquered the world, you English. How unresting you must be! But what," he went on, "is the employment of those men there, on that great space? Are they practising warfare? See how they walk in couples, followed by small boys bent beneath some burden. One stops. The boy gives him a stick. He seems to be addressing himself to the performance of a delicate rite. See how he waves his hands. He has struck something. See how they all move on together; what purpose in their stride! It is the same all over the place—men in pairs, pursuing or striking, and small bent boys following. Tell me what they are doing. Are they tacticians?"

"No," said the other, "they are merely playing"

* From *Old Lamps for New*.

golf. That plain is called a golf links. There are thousands like that in England. It is a game, a recreation. These men are resting, recreating. You cannot see it because it is so small, but there is a little white ball which they hit."

"The pursuit has no other purpose?" asked the foreigner. "It teaches nothing? It does not lead to military skill?"

"No."

"But don't the boys play too?"

"Oh, no. They only carry."

The foreigner was silent for a while and then he pointed again. "See," he said, "that field with the white figures. I have noticed so many. What are they doing? One man runs to a spot and waves his arm; another, some distance away, waves a club at something. Then he runs and another runs. They cross. They cross again. Some of the other figures run too. What does that mean? That surely is practice for warfare?"

"No," said the other, "that is cricket. Cricket is also a game. There are tens of thousands of fields like that all over England. They are merely playing for amusement. The man who waved his arm bowled a ball; the man who waved his club hit it. You cannot see the ball, but it is there."

The stranger was silent again. A little later he drew attention to another field. "What is that?" he said. "There are men and girls with clubs all running among each other. Surely that is war. See how they smite! What Amazons! No wonder England leads the way!"

"No," said the other, "that is hockey. Another game."

"And is there a ball there too?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply, "a ball."

"But see the garden of that house," he remarked; "that is not hockey. There are only four, but two are women. They also leap about and run and wave their arms. Is there a ball there?"

"Yes," was the reply, "there is a ball there. That is lawn tennis."

"But the white lines," he said. "Is not that, perhaps, out-door mathematics? That surely may help to serious things?"

"No," the other replied, "only another game. There are millions of such gardens in England with similar lines."

"Yes," he said, for they were then over Surbiton, "I see them at this moment by the hundred."

They passed on to London. It was at that time of September when football and cricket overlap, and there was not only a crowded cricket match at the Oval but an even more crowded football match at Chelsea.

The foreigner caught sight of the Oval first. "Ah," he said, "you deceived me. For here is your cricket again, played amid a vast concourse. How can you call it a game? These crowds would not come to see a game played, but would play one themselves. It must be more than you said; it must be a form of tactics that can help to retain England's supremacy, and these men are here to learn."

"No," said the other, "no. It is just a game. In England we not only like to play games but to see them played."

It was then that the stranger noticed Blackheath. "Ah, now I have you!" he cried. "Here is another field and another crowd; but this is surely a battle. See how they dash at each other. And yes, look, one of them has had his head cut off and the other kicks it. Splendid!"

"No," said the other, "that is no head, that is a ball. Just a ball. It is a game, like the others."

He groaned. "Then I cannot see," he said at last, "how England won her victories and became supreme."

"Ah," said the other, "at the time that England was winning her victories and climbing into supremacy, the ball was not her master."

THE LOIN OF PORK*

I

Mrs. Chillingham Bull, of "The Cheviots," Little Wickling, to Mr. Henry Ings, Butcher, of Little Wickling

(By hand)

MRS. CHILLINGHAM BULL, finding that her friendly verbal message by her butler to Mr. Ings concerning the nuisance caused by his persistent killing of pigs at the time when she and her household are at family prayers has had no effect, now informs him that she intends to take measures to stop the obnoxious practice.

Sept. 28

II

Mr. Henry Ings to Mrs. Chillingham Bull
(By hand)

MRS. CHILLINGHAM BULL, DEAR MADAM,—it is my wish to kill pigs as quietly as possible, not only to cause as little nuisance as I can, but also out of regard to my own and Mrs. Ing's feelings, both of us being sensitive too. The pig which was killed this morning at the time you name in your favour of even date was specially ordered by Sir Cloudesley Scrubbs, and could not be kept back owing to its

* From *Character and Comedy*.

being market day at Boxton and my killer having to be there.—I am, yours obediently, HENRY INGS

Sept. 28

III

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Sir Cloudesley Scrubbs
(By hand)*

DEAR SIR CLOUDESLEY,—I am sorry to trouble you, but you must put the blame upon my desire to suppress a growing nuisance in our otherwise peaceful village. Ings, the butcher, has contracted the disagreeable habit of killing his pigs between 8.30 and 9, the very time at which we have family prayers, and you cannot conceive how discordant and heartrending are the screams that reach our ears across the lawn at that time. Perks remonstrated with him some time ago, and we thought the matter over; but this morning it broke out again with renewed violence, and on my sending a peremptory note, Ings says that the pig was killed at that hour by your instructions. I shall be glad to hear from you that you repudiate the responsibility.—Yours sincerely,

ADELA CHILLINGHAM BULL

Sept. 28

IV

*Sir Cloudesley Scrubbs to Mrs. Chillingham Bull
(By hand)*

DEAR MRS. CHILLINGHAM BULL,—It is quite true that I ordered the pig, as we are expecting friends who are partial to pork. But I specified no time for its demise, least of all that half-hour in which you perform your devotions. Ings, who is the most civil of men, surely must mean that he understood I was in a hurry, and therefore killed the pig directly the post came in.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Chillingham Bull, yours very truly,

VINCENT CLOUDESLEY SCRUBBS

Sept. 28

V

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Ings
(By hand)*

Mrs. Chillingham Bull having made enquiries of Sir Cloutesley Scrubbs finds that Mr. Ings was quite mistaken in thinking that there was any need for the killing of the pig to occur when it did, and after what has happened she intends to remove her custom to a Boxton butcher as a mark of her displeasure.

Sept. 28

VI

*Mr. Ings to Mrs. Chillingham Bull
(By hand)*

Mr. Ings presents his compliments to Mrs. Chillingham Bull, and begs to enclose his account of £18, 5s. 6d., immediate payment of which would oblige. He also wishes to give notice that the next time he catches any of Mrs. Chillingham Bull's fowls in his garden (notice of same having previously been given, and a stoppage of the nuisance promised) he intends to wring its neck.

Sept. 28

VII

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Sir Cloutesley Scrubbs
(By hand)*

DEAR SIR CLOUDESLEY,—I hasten to send you the enclosed offensive missive from Ings, in response to one from me saying that I could not deal with him any more. I think that you will see the matter in the same light that I do. In such cases neighbours must stand by each other for mutual protection and the harmony of life.—Yours sincerely,

Sept. 28

ADELA CHILLINGHAM BULL

VIII

*Sir Cloutesley Scrubbs to Mrs. Chillingham Bull
(By hand)*

DEAR MRS CHILLINGHAM BULL,—With every desire in the world to oblige you I do not see my way.

as you seem to suggest, to cease to deal with Ings. For one thing we like the quality of his meat; for another—and you must pardon my frankness—I cannot consider that he has shown anything more objectionable than an independent spirit. You say nothing about the fowls, which he seems to look upon as a grievance at any rate not more imaginary than the pig-killing.—Believe me, dear Mrs. Chillingham Bull, yours very truly,

VINCENT CLOUDESLEY SCRUBBS

Sept. 28

IX

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Sir Cloudesley Scrubbs
(By hand)*

DEAR SIR CLOUDESLEY,—I am sincerely pained at the view which you take. I cannot see what can come of village life, if, as I said before, we do not stand by each other. Ings has been most rude to me, and he must be brought to his senscs.—Yours truly,

ADELA CHILLINGHAM BULL

Sept. 28

X

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Blades, Butcher,
Boxton*

Will Mr. Blades please send to Mrs. Chillingham Bull to-morrow morning a fore-quarter of lamb and a wing-rib of beef?

Sept. 28

XI

Mr. Perks to Mr. Blades

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Chillingham Bull of, "The Cheviots," Little Wickling, having decided to change her butcher, and having begun to send you orders, I thought it interesting to let you know that it was by my advice that her choice fell on you.—Yours truly,

HENRY PERKS

Oct. 1

HARVEST HOME

XII

Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Blades

Mrs. Chillingham Bull is very dissatisfied both with the quality of Mr. Blades' meat and the excessive proportion of bone and suet, to which her attention has been called by her butler. Unless an improvement occurs she will have to change her butcher.

Oct. 5

XIII

*Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Earwaker, Butcher,
Boston*

Will Mr. Earwaker please send to Mrs. Chillingham Bull to-morrow morning a leg of mutton and a sirloin of beef?

Oct. 10

XIV

Mr. Perks to Mr. Earwaker

DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Chillingham Bull, of "The Cheviots," Little Wickling, having decided to change her butcher, and having begun to send you orders, I thought it interesting to let you know that it was by my advice that the choice fell on you.—Yours truly,

HENRY PERKS

Oct. 12

XV

Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Earwaker

Mrs. Chillingham Bull is very dissatisfied both with the quality of Mr. Earwaker's meat and the excessive proportion of bone and suet, to which her attention has been drawn by her butler. Unless an improvement occurs she will have to change her butcher.

Oct. 15

XVI

Mrs. Chillingham Bull to the Rev. Dr. Bayham

DEAR RECTOR.—I am sorry you are away from home, because there is a little difficulty in the village

which can be settled only by yourself. Mr. Pipes, though his sermons are irreproachable, and he is most kind, has not the needful tact.

To make a long story short, your petted churchwarden, Ings, a few weeks ago, was very rude to me and I had to take away our custom. The Boxton butchers are, however, very bad, and on thinking it over I am inclined to pardon Ings, but I am afraid from the attitude which he took up that he may not accept my forgiveness in the spirit in which it is offered ; which would, of course, be very unfortunate and wholly unmical to the harmony of village life. I therefore write to ask you if you would write to him.

Perks, who is much distressed about it all, tells me that we shall never have good meat from the other butchers, and he is continually urging me to return to Ings. Will you not, dear Rector, once more prove yourself the Little Wickling mediator ?—Your grateful friend,

ADELA CHILLINGHAM BULL

P.S.—I hope you are enjoying Chamounix. I was there with my dear husband in 1885.

Oct. 17

XVII

* *Dr. Basil Baylham to the Rev. Gregory Pipes*

DEAR PIPES,—Our friend at "The Cheviots" seems to have done something to offend poor Ings, with the result that that good man has been abandoned in favour of the Boxton trade. Knowing both as we do, there can be little doubt as to where the fault lies. Mrs. Bull writes to me asking for my mediation, because, although her spirit is willing to continue the fray, the flesh is weak, and recollections of Ing's excellent fillets seem to be crowding appetisingly upon her, as she struggles with the Boxton gristle. I leave the solution to you with perfect confidence.—Yours,

E. B.

Oct. 20

HARVEST HOME

XVIII

Mr. Henry Ings to Mrs. Chillingham Bull

Received with thanks cheque
for £18, 5s. 7d.

HENRY INGS

Oct. 22

Stamp

XIX

Mrs. Chillingham Bull to Mr. Ings

Understanding from her butler that Mr. Ings has
recently killed a pig, Mrs Chillingham Bull would be
glad if Mr. Ings would send her a loin' of pork.

Oct. 22

THE LETTER N*

A TRAGEDY IN HIGH LIFE

Extract from the copy of Harold Pippett, only reporter for "The Eastbury Herald," as handed to the compositor.

I

INQUIRIES which have been made by one of our representatives yield the gratifying tidings that Kildin Hall, the superb Tudor residence vacated a year or so ago by Lord Glossthorpe, is again let. The new tenant, who will be a valued addition to the neighbourhood, is Mr. Michael Stirring, a retired banker.

II

From "The Eastbury Herald," 2 Sept.

Inquiries which have been made by one of our representatives yield the gratifying tidings that Kildin Hall, the superb Tudor residence vacated a year or so ago by Lord Glossthorpe, is again let. The new tenant, who will be a valued addition to the neighbourhood, is Mr. Michael Stirring, a retired baker.

III

Mr. Guy Lander, Estate Agent, to the Editor of "The Eastbury Herald."

DEAR TED.—There's a fearful bloomer in your paper this week, which you must put right as soon

* From *Old Lamps for New.*

HARVEST HOME

as you can. Mr. Stirring, who has taken Kildin, is not a baker, but a banker. Yours, G. L.

IV

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" to Mr. Guy Lander.

MY DEAR GUY,—Of course it's only a misprint. Pippett wrote "banker" right enough, and the ass of a compositor dropped out the "n." I'll put it right next week. No sensible person would mind.

Yours, EDWARD HEDGES.

V

Mrs. Michael Stirring to the Editor of "The Eastbury Herald."

SIR,—My attention has been called to a very serious misstatement in your paper for Saturday last. It is there stated that my husband, Mr. Michael Stirring, who has taken Kildin Hall, is a retired baker. This is absolutely false. Mr. Stirring is a retired banker, than which nothing could be much more different. Mr. Stirring is at this moment too ill to read the papers, and the slander will therefore be kept from him a little longer, but what the consequences will be when he hears of it I tremble to think. Kindly assure me that you will give the denial as much publicity as the falsehood.

Yours faithfully,
AUGUSTA STIRRING.

VI

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" to Mrs. Michael Stirring.

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" presents his compliments to Mrs. Stirring and begs to express his profound regret that the misprint of which she complains should have crept into his paper. That it was a misprint and not an intentional misstatement.

he has the reporter's copy to prove. He will, of course, insert in the next issue of "The Eastbury Herald" a paragraph correcting the error, but he would point out to Mrs. Stirring that it was also stated in the paragraph that Mr. Stirring would be a valued addition to the neighbourhood.

VII

Mrs. Stirring to the Editor of "The Eastbury Herald."

SIR,—Whatever the cause of the slander, whether malice or misadventure, the fact remains that you have done a very cruel thing. I enclose a cutting from the 'London' Press, sent me by a friend, which will show you that the calumny is becoming widely spread. Mr. Stirring is so weak and dispirited that we fear he may have got some inkling of it. Your position if he discovers the worst will be terrible.

I am, Yours faithfully,
AUGUSTA STIRRING.

(THE ENCLOSURE)

From "The Morning Star."

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

We get the new movement in a nutshell in the report from Eastbury that Lord Glossthorpe has let his historic house to a retired baker named Stirring, etc., etc.

VIII

From "The Eastbury Herald," 9 Sept.

ERRATUM.—In our issue last week an unfortunate misprint made us state that the new tenant of Kildin Hall was a retired baker. The word was of course banker.

IX

Mr. John Bridger, Baker, to the Editor of "The Eastbury Herald."

DEAR HEDGES,—I was both pained and surprised to find a man of your principles and a friend of

HARVEST HOME

mine writing of bakers as you did this week. Why should you "of course" have meant a banker? Why cannot a retired baker take a fine house if he wants to? I am thoroughly ashamed of you, and wish to withdraw my advertisement from your paper. Yours truly, JOHN BRIDGER.

X

Messrs. Greenery & Bills, Steam Bakery, Dumbridge.

DEAR SIR,—After the offensive slur upon bakers in the current number of your paper we feel that we have no other course but to withdraw our advertisement; so please discontinue it from this date.

Yours faithfully,

GREENERY & BILLS.

XI

Mrs. Stirring to the Editor of "The Eastbury Herald."

SIR,—I fear you have not done your best to check the progress of your slanderous paragraph, since only this morning I received the enclosed. You will probably not be surprised to learn that through your efforts the old-world paradise of Kildin, in which we had hoped to end our days, has been rendered impossible. We could not settle in a new neighbourhood with such an initial handicap.

- Yours truly, AUGUSTA STIRRING.

(THE ENCLOSURE)

From "The Daily Leader"

THE TRIUMPH OF DEMOCRACY

After lying empty for nearly two years Lord Glossthorpe's country seat has been let to a retired baker named Stirring, etc., etc.

XII

Mrs. Michael Stirring to Mr. Guy Lander.

DEAR SIR,—After the way that the good name and fame of my husband and myself have been poisoned both in the local and the London Press, we

cannot think further of coming to live at Kildin Hall. Every post brings from one or other of my friends some paragraph perpetuating the lie. Kindly therefore consider the negotiations completely at an end.

I am, Yours faithfully,

AUGUSTA STIRRING.

XIII

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" to Mr. John Bridger.

DEAR BRIDGER,—You were too hasty. A man has to do the best he can. When I wrote "of course," I meant it as a stroke of irony. In other words, I was, and am, and ever shall be, on your side. You will be glad to hear that in consequence of the whole thing I have got notice to leave, my proprietor being under obligations to Lord Glossthorpe, and you may therefore restore your patronage to "The Herald" with a clear conscience.

Yours sincerely, EDWARD HEDGES.

XIV

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" to Mrs. Stirring.

The Editor of "The Eastbury Herald" presents his compliments to Mrs. Stirring for the last time, and again assures her that the whole trouble grew from the natural carelessness of an overworked and underpaid compositor. He regrets sincerely the unhappiness which that mistake has caused, and looks forward to a day when retired bakers and retired bankers will be considered as equally valuable additions to a neighbourhood. In retirement, as in the grave, he likes to think of all men as equal. With renewed apologies for the foul aspersion which he cast upon Mr. and Mrs. Stirring, he begs to conclude.

P.S.—Mrs. Stirring will be pleased to hear that not only the writer but the compositor are under notice to leave.

THE CHAUFFEUR*

I

*Mrs. Adrian Armyne to her sister
(Extract)*

WE have found a most delightful chauffeur, a Frenchman named Achille Le Bon, who speaks English perfectly, although with a fascinating accent, and is altogether most friendly and useful. He is continually doing little things for me, and it is nice too to have someone to talk French with. Adrian's conversational French has always been very rusty. You remember how in that little shop at Avignon in 1887 he said "Quel dommage?" for "What is the price?"

II

Mr. Adrian Armyne to the Conservative Agent at W—chester

Mr. Adrian Armyne presents his compliments to Mr. Bashford, and greatly regrets what must look very like a slight in his absence from the chair at last night's meeting, but circumstances over which he had no control caused him to miss the way in his motor-car and afterwards to break down at a spot where it was impossible to get any other vehicle. Mr. Armyne cannot too emphatically express his regret at the occurrence, and his hope that trust in

* From *Character and Comedy*.

his good faith as a worker in the cause of Fiscal Reform may not be permanently shattered.

III

Sir Vernon Boyce to Mr. Armyne

DEAR ARMYNE,—I think you ought to know that I came across your Frenchman with a gun in the Lower Spinney this morning, evidently intending to get what he could. He explained to me that he distinctly understood you to say that he was at liberty to shoot there. How such a misunderstanding can have arisen I cannot guess, but he is now clearly informed as to divisions of land and other matters which apparently are different in France. It is all right, but I think you ought to keep an eye on him.—Yours sincerely,

VERNON BOYCE.

IV

Mrs. Armyne to her sister

(*Extract*)

Achille is certainly very useful, although his mercurial French nature makes him a little too careless about time, and once or twice he has been nowhere to be found at important junctures. For instance, we completely missed Lord Lancaster's wedding the other day. Not that that mattered very much, especially as we had sent a silver inkstand, but Adrian is rather annoyed. Achille plays the mandoline charmingly (we hear him at night in the servants' hall), and he has been teaching me *repoussé* work.

V

Mrs. Armyne to Mrs. Jack Lyon

DEAR MRS. LYON,—My husband and myself are deeply distressed to have put out your table last evening, but it was one of those accidents that occur now and then, and which there is no foreseeing or remedying. The fact is that we were all ready to go

and had ordered the car, when it transpired that Achille, our chauffeur, had been called to London by telegram, and had left in so great a hurry that he had no time to warn us. By the time we could have sent to the village and got a carriage your dinner would have been over, and so we decided not to go at all. Achille has not yet returned, which makes us fear that the poor fellow, who has relatives in Soho, may have found real trouble — Yours sincerely,

EMILY ARMYNE.

VI

Mr. Armyne to Achille Le Bon

DEAR ACHILLE,—I am very sorry to have to tell you that it has been made necessary for us to ask you to go. This is not on account of any dissatisfaction that we have with you, but merely that Mrs. Armyne has heard of the son of an old housekeeper of her father's who wishes for a post as chauffeur, and she feels it only right that he should be given a trial. You will, I am sure, see how the case stands. Perhaps we had better say that a month's notice begins from to-day, but you may leave as much earlier as you like. I shall, of course, be only too pleased to do all I can to find you another situation. I should have told you this in person, but had to go to town, and now write because I think it would be wrong not to let you have as early an intimation of Mrs. Armyne's decision as possible.—I am, yours faithfully,

ADRIAN ARMYNE.

VII

*Mr. Armyne to Achille Le Bon
(By hand)*

DEAR ACHILLE,—I am afraid that a letter which was posted to you from London when I was last there, a month ago, cannot have reached you. Letters are sometimes lost, and this must be one of them. In it I had to inform you that Mrs. Armyne, having made arrangements for an English chauffeur who

has claims on her consideration (being the son of an old housekeeper of her father's, who was in his service for many years, and quite one of the family), it was made necessary for us, much against our will, for we esteem you very highly, to ask you to go. As that letter miscarried, I must now repeat the month's notice that I then was forced to give, and the permission for you to leave at any time within the month if you like.—I am, yours faithfully,

ADRIAN ARMYNE

VIII

*Mr. Armyne to his nephew, Sidney Burnet
(Extract)*

There seems to be nothing for it but to sell our car. This is a great blow to us, but we cannot go on as we are, apparently owning a car but in reality being owned by a chauffeur.

IX

Sidney Burnet to Mr. Armyne

DEAR UNCLE,—Don't sell the car. The thing to do is to pretend to sell it, get rid of your Napoleon, and then have it back. Why not say I have bought it? I will come over one day soon and drive it home. Say Thursday morning.—Your affectionate nephew,

SIDNEY

X

Mr. Armyne to Mr. Sidney Burnet

MY DEAR SIDNEY,—Your plan seems to me to be ingenious, but your aunt is opposed to it. She says that Achille might find it out. Suppose, for example, he came back for something he had forgotten and saw the car in the coach-house again! What should we do? Another objection is that poor Job is ill, and Achille remarked to me the other day that before he took to engineering he was a gardener. From what I know of him, this means that unless Job gets better, Achille—if your plan is carried through—will ask to be retained in Job's place, and

THE TESTIMONIAL*

I

*Jabez Copley, of Copley's Stores, to the leading residents
of Great Burley and neighbourhood*

(CYCLOSTYLE)

THE MISSENDEN TESTIMONIAL FUND

DEAR SIR (or MADAM),—I have the honour to inform you that our worthy Stationmaster Mr. Missenden, having received promotion, is leaving us very shortly for a higher sphere of activity, and some of his friends met together last night at the "King's Arms" to confer as to a testimonial to be presented to him. Greatly to my surprise, I was asked to undertake the duties of hon. secretary and hon. treasurer, and it is in these capacities that I take the liberty of addressing you. The meeting decided to open a subscription list for Mr. Missenden in the town and neighbourhood, and to present him with the proceeds and with an illuminated address.

The following is the address that was drawn up—I may say by myself:—

Presented to

JAMES HENRY MISSENDEN

**BY THE GENTRY AND INHABITANTS OF GREAT
BURLEY**

on the occasion of his departure from that
Town, on the completion of nearly Eight

* From *Character and Comedy*.

HARVEST HOME

Years of honourable service as Station Master, to take up a post of increased responsibility at Clapham Junction—as a mark of their appreciation of his Courtesy and Efficiency during his period of office at Great Burley Terminus.

This address will be engrossed in several colours and in gold, with appropriate borders and scroll-work (as in the illuminated texts in our bedrooms) by Miss Millie Feathers, at the school, who is very clever and artistic with her hands, and presented to Mr. Missenden, with the purse, at the "King's Arms" on a suitable evening.—Awaiting your reply, I am, dear Sir (or Madam), yours obediently,

JABEZ COPLEY
Hon. Sec. and Treasurer of the
Missenden Testimonial Fund

Added, in Mr. Copley's own hand, to a few of the letters

P.S.—It is not my wish to intrude business, but I feel it would be wrong not to take this opportunity of informing you that I have just received a particularly advantageous line of preserved fruits, which I can do at extraordinarily low terms. No time should be lost in ordering.

II

Miss Mill to Mr. Jabez Copley

DEAR MR. COPLEY,—I had no idea that the Station-master was going. How interesting to find that his name is Missenden! It was the name of my mother's favourite cook. She came, I think from Esher, or it may have been Exeter. It is odd how long one may live without knowing the name of one's Station-master, although my niece tells me it has to be painted up somewhere, like a licensed victualler's. I think I should like to try a box of the preserved fruit if it is really nice.—Yours truly,

LYDIA MILL

III

Sir Charles Transom's Secretary to Mr. Jabez Copley

DEAR SIR,—Sir Charles Transom directs me to present his compliments and to express his regret that he must decline to lend his support to the testimonial to the Great Burley Stationmaster. Sir Charles dislikes to see this kind of premium put upon duty, nor can he forget the want of sympathetic zeal and alacrity displayed by the Stationmaster in the autumn of 1898 in the matter of a lost portmanteau containing the manuscript of Sir Charles' monograph on the Transom family.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

VINCENT A. LINCOLN

IV

The Vicar of Great Burley to Mr. Jabez Copley

DEAR MR. COPLEY,—I am afraid I cannot associate myself very cordially with the terms of your testimonial to Mr. Missenden. Eight years is a very short period to signalise in this way, and I do not care for the part played by the "King's Arms." I am sorry to have to take this line; but we must act as we believe. I should be seriously vexed if you got up a testimonial for me after so short a term of work.—I am, yours sincerely,

REGINALD LOWTHER

V

Mr. Jabez Copley to the Vicar of Great Burley

REVEREND SIR,—I regret that you cannot give your valuable and esteemed support to the testimonial to Mr. Missenden, but I respect your motives. I should like to say in reply to your suggestion about a testimonial to yourself and my connection with it, that I should never, I hope, so far presume as to take the leading part in a movement of this kind for a gentleman like yourself. My rule in life is that station should keep to station, and I trust I shall

never be so foolish as to depart from it. But although I should not presume to take a leading part in your testimonial, as you kindly suggest, I should, however, contribute to it with a whole heart.— Believe me, yours obediently,

JABEZ COPLEY

Hon. Sec. and Treasurer of the
Missenden Testimonial Fund

VI

Mrs. Aylmer Penistone to Mr. Jabez Copley

DEAR MR. COPLEY,—I do not quite feel disposed to give anything to Missenden. You should draw up a different testimonial for those of us who travel third-class, omitting the word "courtesy."—I am, yours faithfully.

AYLMER PENISTONE

VII

Mrs. Lyon Mounteney to Mr. Jabez Copley

Mrs. Mounteney is very pleased to see, from Mr. Copley's letter, that a spirit of friendliness and comradeship is abroad in Great Burley. Would that all English towns had the same generous feelings! Not having used the railway for several years, owing to her poor health, Mrs. Mounteney does not feel that she could with propriety identify herself with so personal a testimonial, but she wishes it every success. Mrs. Mounteney does not care for preserved fruit.

VIII

Mr. Murray Collier, L.R.C.P., to Mr. Jabez Copley

DEAR MR. COPLEY,—A difficulty with regard to the boys' boxes, which occurs regularly at the end of each term, and which brings out Mr. Missenden's native churlishness like a rash, makes it impossible for me to support your appeal. After what I have had to say and write to the Stationmaster it would seem pure pusillanimity to give him money and praise. May I, however, suggest the emendation of one small oversight in your otherwise tasteful address? By

no possible means can our little wayside station be described as a "terminus," which is a Latin word signifying the end, as I fancy your son Harold (whom we all find a very promising and attractive boy) would be able to tell you.—I am, yours sincerely,

MURRAY COLLIER

IX

Mr. Jabez Copley to the leading residents of Great Burley and Neighbourhood

(CYCLOSTYLE)

THE MISSENDEN TESTIMONIAL FUND

DEAR SIR (or MADAM),—I beg to inform you that at an influential and representative meeting held last evening at the "King's Arms," it was decided with much regret not to take any further steps with regard to the testimonial to Mr. Missenden, and to return to the several donors the £4 17s. 6d. which the united efforts of myself and two of my assistants have been able to collect in the past month, minus an amount of one guinea to Miss Millie Feathers for work already done on the illuminated address, which cannot, we fear, owing to the peculiar nature of the wording and its reference to Clapham Junction, be adapted to suit any other person.

If anything is now done to indicate to Mr. Missenden that Great Burley appreciates his services, which is very doubtful, it will be done by a few personal friends, at the "King's Arms." I may say here that I have decided under no conditions to ever again undertake the duties of Secretary or Treasurer of a Testimonial, whether hon. or even well paid.—Believe me, dear Sir (or Madam), yours obediently,

JABEZ COBLEY

P.S.—As I am now laying down for ever the pen of the testimonial promoter, I may return to my true vocation as a purveyor of high-class provisions by saying that I have received this morning a consignment of sardines of a new and reliable brand, which I can do at 6*d.* the box.

THE MONKEY'S REVENGE*

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

Once upon a time there was a little girl named Clara Amabel Piatts. She lived in Kensington, near the Gardens, and every day when it was fine she walked with Miss Hobbs round the Round Pond. Miss Hobbs was her governess. When it was wet she read a book, or as much of a book as she could, being still rather weak in the matter of long words. When she did not read she made wool-work articles for her aunts, and now and then something for her mother's birthday present or Christmas present, which was supposed to be a secret, but which her mother, however hard she tried not to look, always knew all about. But this did not prevent her mother, who was a very nice lady, from being extraordinarily surprised when the present was given to her. (That word "extraordinarily," by the way, is one of the words which Clara would have had to pass over if she were reading this story to herself; but you, of course, are clever.)

It was generally admitted by Mrs. Piatts, and also by Miss Hobbs and Kate Woodley the nurse, that Clara was a very good girl: but she had one fault which troubled them all, and that was too much readiness in saying what came into her mind. Mrs. Piatts tried to check her by making her count five

* From Anne's Terrible Good Nature.

before she made any comment on what was happening, so that she could be sure that she really ought to say it ; and Kate Woodley used often to click her tongue when Clara was rattling on ; but Miss Hobbs had another and more serious remedy. She used to tell Clara to ask herself three questions before she made any of her quick little remarks. These were the questions : (1) " Is it kind ? " (2) " Is it true ? " (3) " Is it necessary ? " If the answer to all three was " Yes," then Clara might say what she wanted to ; otherwise not. The result was that when Clara and Miss Hobbs walked round the Round Pond Clara had very little to say ; because, you know, if it comes to that, hardly anything is necessary.

Well, on December 20th, 1907, the postman brought Mrs. Platts a letter from Clara's aunt, Miss Amabel Patterson of Chislehurst, after whom she had been named, and it was that letter which makes this story. It began by saying that Miss Patterson would very much like Clara to have a nice Christmas present, and it went on to say that if she had been very good lately, and continued good up to the time of buying the present, it was to cost seven-and-six, but if she had not been very good it was to cost only a shilling. This shows you the kind of aunt Miss Patterson was. For myself, I don't think that at Christmas-time a matter of good or bad behaviour ought to be remembered at all. And I think that everything then ought to cost seven-and-six. But Miss Patterson had her own way of doing things ; and it did not really matter about the shilling at all, because, as it was agreed that Clara had been very good for a long time, Mrs. Platts (who did not admire Miss Patterson's methods any more than we do) naturally decided that unless anything were still to happen (which was very unlikely with six-and-sixpence at stake) the present should cost seven-and-six, just as if nothing about a shilling had ever been said.

Unless anything were still to happen. Ah ! Everything in this story depends on that.

Clara was as good as gold all the morning, and she and Miss Hobbs marched round the Round Pond like soldiers, Miss Hobbs talking all the time and Clara as dumb as a fish. At dinner also she behaved beautifully, although the pudding was not at all what she liked ; and then it was time for her mother to take her out to buy the present. So, still good, Clara ran upstairs to be dressed.

As I daresay you know, there are in Kensington High Street a great many large shops, and the largest of these, which is called Biter's, has a very nice way every December of filling one of its windows (which for the rest of the year is full of dull things, such as tables, and rolls of carpets, and coal scuttles) with such seasonable and desirable articles as boats for the Round Pond, and dolls of all sorts and sizes, and steam engines with quite a lot of rails and signals, and clockwork animals, and guns. And when you go inside you can't help hearing the gramaphone.

It was into this shop that Mrs. Platts and Clara went, wondering whether they would buy just one thing that cost seven-and-six all at once, or a lot of smaller things that came to seven-and-six altogether ; which is one of the pleasantest problems to ponder over that this life holds. Well, everything was going splendidly, and Clara, after many changings of her mind, had just decided on a beautiful wax doll with cheeks like tulips and real black hair, when she chanced to look up and saw a funny little old gentleman come in at the door ; and all in a flash she forgot her good resolutions and everything that was depending on them, and seizing her mother's arm, and giving no thought at all to Miss Hobbs's three questions, or to Kate Woodley's clicking tongue, or to counting five, she cried in a loud quick whisper, " Oh, mother, do look at that queer little man ! Isn't he just like a monkey ? "

Now there were two dreadful things about this speech. One was that it was made before Aunt Amabel's present had been bought, and therefore

Mrs. Platts became entitled to spending a shilling, and the other was that the little old gentleman must have heard it, for his face flushed and he looked exceedingly uncomfortable. Indeed, it was an uncomfortable time for every one, for Mrs. Platts was very unhappy to think that her little girl not only should have lost the nice doll, but also have been so rude; the little old gentleman was confused and nervous; the girl who was waiting on them was distressed when she knew what Clara's unlucky speech had cost her; and Clara herself was in a passion of tears. After some time, in which Mrs. Platts and the girl did their best to soothe her, Clara consented to receive a shilling box of chalks as her present, and was led back still sobbing. Never was there such a sad ending to an exciting expedition.

Miss Hobbs luckily had gone home; but Kate Woodley made things worse by being very sorry and clicking away like a Bee clock, and Clara hardly knew how to get through the rest of the day.

Clara's bedtime came always at a quarter to eight, and between her supper, which was at half-past six, and that hour she used to come downstairs and play with her father and mother. On this evening she was very quiet and miserable, although Mrs. Platts and Mr. Platts did all they could to cheer her; and she even committed one of the most extraordinary actions of her life, for she said, when it was still only half-past seven, that she should like to go to bed.

And she would have gone had not at that very moment a tremendous knock sounded at the front door—so tremendous that, in spite of her unhappiness, Clara had, of course, to wait and see what it was.

And what do you think it was? It was a box addressed to Mrs. Platts, and it came from Biter's, the very shop where the tragedy had occurred.

"But I haven't ordered anything," said Mrs. Platts.

"Never mind," said Mr. Platts, who had a practical mind. "Open it."

So the box was opened, and inside was a note, and this is what it said :

" DEAR MADAM,—I am so distressed to think that I am the cause of your little girl losing her present, that I feel there is nothing I can do but give her one myself. For if I had not been so foolish—at my age too!—as to go to Biter's this afternoon, without any real purpose but to look round, she would never have got into trouble. Biter's is for children, not for old men with queer faces. And so I beg leave to send her this doll, which I hope is the right one, and with it a few clothes and necessaries, and I am sure that she will not forget how it was that she very nearly lost it altogether.

" Believe me, yours penitently,

" THE LITTLE-OLD-MAN-WHO-REALLY-IS-(AS-HIS-LOOKING-GLASS-HAS-TOO-OFTEN-TOLD-HIM)-LIKE-A-MONKEY."

To Clara this letter, when Mrs. Platts read it to her, seemed like something in a dream, but when the box was unpacked it was found to contain, truly enough, not only the identical doll which she had wanted, with cheeks like tulips and real black hair, but also frocks for it, and night-dresses and petticoats, a card of tortoiseshell toilet requisites, and three and a tiny doll's parasol for Kensington Gardens sunny days.

Poor Clara didn't know what to do, and so simply sat down with the doll in her arms and again; but this was a different kind of from that which had gone before. And when Kate Woodley came to take her to bed she cried too.

And the funny thing is that, though the gentleman's present looks much more like a for being naughty than a punishment, Clara hardly ever since said a quick unkind thing that could be sorry for, and Miss Hobbs's three qu are never wanted at all, and Kate Woodley has tiredly given up clicking.

THE BUSY MAN'S BIBLE

AN IMAGINARY REVIEW

[WRITTEN IN 1893]

IT is finished at last and in the hands of a public that cannot be too grateful for such a valuable addition to their store of literature. For centuries have Englishmen struggled with the overwhelming bulk and bald and archaic style of the Book of Books : it has been reserved for the Twentieth Century Publishing Co. to give it adequate treatment and dress out its wisdom, homely but practical, with attractions that cannot fail to please the man in the street. *The Busy Man's Bible* is so small, so cheap, and so smart in tone that henceforth there will be no excuse for those persons who are ignorant of scripture. The editor of the book has done his work with such thoroughness, packed his information so closely, and touched so happily upon such extraneous matter as is in any way apposite or interesting (not much, it is true), that a reader can be master of Holy Writ in a couple of hours and a profound biblical scholar in a day. More than this. The book is so richly garnished with sprigs of erudition, that before the purchaser has reached the last page, he will be a veritable encyclopedia of curious information.

The Busy Man's Bible is a triumph of the publishing art, a book which the fastest runner can read best. If we have any fault to find, it is with the

designer of the striking pictorial cover, which represents the death of Jezebel. The artist has shown an undue restraint; to our mind the horror of the scene is such that no amount of exaggeration would have been inappropriate. We also think it would have been more in keeping with the usefulness of the book if the publishers had accepted advertisements for the margins of the pages. These blemishes, however, may be remedied in subsequent issues.

The appearance of *The Busy Man's Bible* was inevitable. Every year we as a nation have been growing more and more intolerant of the long-winded strictures upon this and that subject which so pleased our unhappy and ill-advised ancestors. Our aim has been to take mental nourishment in the smallest possible doses with the greatest possible flavour, a sign of the times which is now universally apparent.

It is now time to give some idea of the scope and method of *The Busy Man's Bible*, and there seems no better way of doing this than by quoting at random from its informing pages, advising the reader (as we do so) to note how successfully the passages have been pruned and modernized:

Mordecai was Esther's first cousin.

Flung into a lions' den, the prophet Daniel was found next morning unharmed.

At the time David took the census of his people, he found 800,000 fighting men in Israel and 500,000 in Judah. Putting their average height at 5½ feet we arrive at the conclusion that if placed lengthwise in a row, head to feet, they would cover a distance of 1,354 miles, or more than half the circumference of the earth. Putting their average thickness at 1 foot we find that if placed one upon the other horizontally they would attain an altitude of nearly 250 miles, or 1,360,000th of the distance from the earth to the sun. This is very interesting. Further, if standing, say, in Hyde Park, they simultaneously shouted some such simple word as "Hustle!" the would be heard in Jamaica.

Elijah was fed by ravens.

Physical defects were not unknown among Hebrew celebrities. Moses stammered, Lot (on one occasion at least) drank too much, Job suffered from boils, Saul from neurosis, Naaman from leprosy, Samson from blindness, Pharaoh from plagues, and Ishmael from thirst.

Absalom, David's son, had unusually long hair.

Methusaleh died at the age of 969 years, or 876 years older than Mr. Gladstone at the time he introduced the second Home Rule Bill.

It is remarkable how the number ten is repeated in the Bible. There were ten commandments, ten tribes, ten plagues; the Books of Esther and Ezra have each ten chapters; and there are ten verses in Psalm cxli.

In the Philistine army was a soldier with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

King Nebuchadnezzar ate grass.

Noah's Ark was 183 yards long, 30 yards broad, and 18 yards high. It was large enough to accommodate representatives of every variety of animal. The "Campania," recently built for the Cunard Line (something like 4,242 years later), was 208 yards long, and 22 yards broad, having an ocean speed of 22 knots per hour. It is to be regretted that the sailing powers of the ark are not mentioned.

Some Biblical teetotallers: Samson, David, Hana-niah, Mishael, Azariah.

There have been few more exciting careers than that of Joseph, the Egyptian premier. The son of a rich Israelite sheep-farmer, he was early made the recipient of cruelty at the hands of his brothers, whose barbarous treatment culminated in selling him as a slave to foreign traders. Subsequently he was imprisoned on a false charge, liberated by Pharaoh, King of Egypt, in recognition of his extraordinary powers of translating dreams, and constituted Prime Minister of the State. This post he held for some years, fulfilling admirably all his duties, and before

his death he had the supreme satisfaction of seeing his father again, and forgiving the malice of his brethren.

In his childhood, Moses, the great legislator, was hidden among the rushes of the Nile, a river noted for its periodical overflows.

The Book of Psalms consists of 150 sacred songs, principally the work of King David, who combined the practice of poetry with the duties of monarch. David was a red haired man who in his youth had successful encounters with a lion, a bear, and a giant. The Psalms have small personal interest, and are now perused solely for their intrinsic merits, which are more adapted to persons with literary tastes than to those thirsting for useful information.

Accused by the other passengers of bringing disaster upon the vessel, Jonah was thrown overboard and for a considerable time remained in comparative safety in the stomach of a huge fish, wrongfully thought to be a whale.

That is a melancholy story of Jephthah the Gileadite. Returning from a successful campaign he vowed to offer as a sacrifice the first person who met him at door. His daughter, a beautiful young damsel, the unfortunate individual.

JACK*

EVERY village has its Jack, but no village ever
had quite so fine a Jack as ours :—
So picturesque,
Versatile,
Irresponsible,
Powerful,
Hedonistic,
And lovable a Jack as ours.

2

How Jack lived none knew, for he rarely did any work.
True, he set night-lines for eels, and invariably caught one,
Often two,
Sometimes three ;
While very occasionally he had a day's harvesting or hay-making.
And yet he always found enough money for tobacco,
With a little over for beer, though he was no soaker.

3

Jack had a wife.
A soulless, savage woman she was, who disapproved volubly of his idle ways.

* From *The Open Road*.

But the only result was to make him stay out longer,
(Like Rip Van Winkle).

4

Jack had a big black beard, and a red shirt, which was
made for another,
And no waistcoat.
His boots were somebody else's ;
He wore the doctor's coat,
And the Vicar's trousers.
Personally, I gave him a hat, but it was too small.

5

Everybody liked Jack.
The Vicar liked him, although he never went to church.
Indeed, he was a cheerful Pagan, with no temptation
to break more than the Eighth Commandment,
and no ambition as a sinner.
The Curate liked him, although he had no simpering
daughters.
The Doctor liked him, although he was never ill.
I liked him too—chiefly because of his perpetual good
temper, and his intimacy with Nature, and his
capacity for colouring cutties.
The girls liked him, because he brought them the first
wild roses and the sweetest honeysuckle ;
Also, because he could flatter so outrageously.

6

But the boys loved him.
They followed him in little bands :
Jack was their hero.
And no wonder, for he could hit a running rabbit
a stone,
And erect them long, straight fishing-poles
equilateral catty forks ;
And he always knew of a fresh nest.
Besides, he could make a thousand things with
his pocket-knife.

7

How good he was at cricket too !
 On the long evenings he would saunter to the green
 and watch the lads at play,
 And by and by some one would offer him a few
 knocks.
 Then the Doctor's coat would be carefully detached,
 and Jack would spit on his hands, and brandish
 the bat,
 And away the ball would go, north and south and
 east and west,
 And sometimes bang into the zenith,
 For Jack has little science :
 Upon each ball he made the same terrific and magnifi-
 cent onslaught,
 Whether half volley, or full pitch, or long hop, or leg
 break, or off break, or shooter, or yorker.
 And when the stumps fell he would cheerfully set
 them up again, while his white teeth flashed in
 the recesses of his beard.

8

The only persons who were not conspicuously fond of
 Jack were his wife, and the schoolmaster, and the
 head-keeper.
 The schoolmaster had an idea that if Jack were
 hanged there would be no more truants ;
 His wife would attend the funeral without an extra-
 ordinary show of grief ;
 And the head-keeper would mutter, " There's one
 poacher less."

9

Jack was quite as much a part of the village as the
 church spire ;
 And if any of us lazed along by the river in the dusk
 of the evening—
 Waving aside nebulae of gnats,
 Turning head quickly at the splash of a jumping fish,

Peering where the water chuckled over a vanishing
water-rat—
And saw not Jack's familiar form bending over his
lines,
And smelt not his vile shag,
We should feel a loneliness, a vague impression that
something was wrong.

IO

For ten years Jack was always the same,
Never growing older,
Or richer,
Or tidier,
Never knowing that we had a certain pride in possess-
ing him.
Then there came a tempter with tales of easily
acquired wealth, and Jack went away in his
company.

II

He has never come back,
And now the village is like a man who has lost an
In the gloaming, no slouching figure, with
idleness in every line, leans against my
wall, with prophecies of to-morrow's wea
And those who reviled Jack most wonder now
was they found fault with.
We feel our bereavement deeply.
The Vicar, I believe, would like to offer public
for the return of the wanderer.
And the Doctor, I know, is a little unhinged,
curing people out of pure absence of mind.
For my part, I have hope; and the trousers I
carded last week will not be given away just

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